

The Devil Kings in Medieval Daoism
A Study of the *Most High Dongyuan Scripture of Divine Spells*

by

Russell L. Hurt

B.A., Trinity University, 2000

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Religious Studies
2007

UMI Number: 1442961



UMI Microform 1442961

Copyright 2007 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

This thesis entitled:
The Devil Kings in Medieval Daoism
A Study of the *Most High Dongyuan Scripture of Divine Spells*
written by Russell L. Hurt
has been approved for the Department of Religious Studies

Terry F. Kleeman

Rodney L. Taylor

Paul W. Kroll

Date _____

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
Find that the content and form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

Abstract

The Most High Dongyuan Scripture of Divine Spells (*Taishang dongyuan shen Zhou jing* 太上洞淵神呪經) is a Daoist text that originated in China's Medieval period in the southern region of Jiangnan 江南, towards the end of the Eastern Jin 晉 Dynasty (317-420). According to the text, humanity is in great danger from hordes of demons that are now flooding the world. These demons will spread disease and chaos, causing an untold number of deaths and the unraveling of society. Humanity's only hope is the leaders of these demons themselves. These devil kings (*mowang* 魔王) and *demon kings* (*guiwang* 鬼王) will come to the aid of faithful and knowledgeable Daoists by driving out lesser demons and killing those who disobey. This thesis will analyze the unique cosmology created by the conversion of demons as described throughout the text.

Table of Contents

One: Context and Content	1
History	3
Apocalypse	7
Divine Spells	15
Religious Professionals	18
Summary of Contents	21
 Two: Cosmology of the <i>Divine Spells</i>	 25
 Three: Ritual and Reality of the <i>Divine Spells</i>	 39
Conclusion	53
 Appendix: Translation of Chapter Four, “Killing Demons”	 56
 Bibliography	 66

Chapter One: Context and Content

The *Most High Dongyuan Scripture of Divine Spells*¹ is a Daoist text that originated in China's Medieval period in the southern region of Jiangnan 江南, towards the end of the Eastern Jin 晉 Dynasty (317-420) and into the Liu Song 劉宋 Dynasty (420-479). The text evolved over the following centuries until it reached its current form in the Five Dynasties Period (907-960). While this text was not as influential or innovative as texts from contemporary Daoist movements, it is unique and deserving of study.

The *Divine Spells* ostensibly belongs to the Celestial Master (*tianshi* 天師) school; or rather, was adopted by this group. It was clearly influenced by thought from all schools and identifies itself with them.² It is most likely that the text was revealed over time to a group that formed around these revelations. The text taps into traditions that were not exclusive to a particular Daoist school, and also to broader Buddhist and Chinese themes. The startlingly exclusive and pessimistic apocalyptic view adopted by the text strongly suggests that those who believed in this text formed their own community and likely proselytized to members of the broader Daoist community as well as followers of other religious traditions.

According to the text, humanity is in great danger from hordes of demons that are now flooding the world. These demons will spread disease and chaos, causing an untold number of deaths and the unraveling of society. Humanity's only hope is the

¹ CT 335 *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing* 太上洞淵神呪經.

² CT 335 5.8b1. The text refers to itself as the Scripture of the Limitless Samadhi of Shangqing and Lingbao (*Shangqing lingbao wuliang sanmei jing* 上清靈寶無量三昧經).

leaders of these demons themselves. These devil kings (*mowang* 魔王) and demon kings (*guiwang* 鬼王) will come to the aid of faithful and knowledgeable Daoists by driving out lesser demons and killing those who disobey. This process of converting demons gives the text its formidable power. This thesis will analyze the unique cosmology created by the conversion of demons as described throughout the text.

Before examining the devil kings and their kin, we will briefly explore the origins and history of the text and several of its unique and misunderstood features such as the role of apocalyptic themes and the hierarchy of practitioners in the text. We will also delve into the surprising lack of spells (*zhou* 呪) in the *Scripture of Divine Spells*. These items are vital for understanding the social context and goals of the text.

Taking all of this information into account, we will then examine the soteriology and theodicy of the text. As we will see, the text itself lies at the center of its own tradition. All good to be found in the world emanates from it and exists only in relation to the text. All hope of a future is to be found in the text and its power. This power is not derived so much from the content of the text as its supernatural demon-quelling abilities. Salvation and great happiness are available, but only to those who have faith in the text and avail themselves of the practices described therein.

In order to facilitate a practical understanding of the text's content and context, a translation and detailed discussion of the fourth chapter is presented here, with special emphasis paid to the ritual instructions found therein. This chapter presents

some interesting elements, but is, for the most part, similar to other sections of the text. Therefore, analyzing this section will provide readers with a broad understanding of the style and subject matter of the larger text. This translation and elaboration will greatly add to the current scholarship which has, for the most part, focused on the first chapter of the text.³

History of the *Divine Spells*

The *Divine Spells* lies at the center of an independent textual tradition containing nine additional texts found in the *Daoist Canon* (*Zhengtong daoze* 正統道藏)⁴ and at least seven that are lost.⁵ Dating the *Divine Spells* precisely is impossible so it is not surprising that various sources supply different possibilities. The version found in the Ming Dynasty *Daoist Canon* is twenty chapters⁶ long and

³ Christine Mollier, *Une Apocalypse Taoïste du Ve Siècle. Le Livre des Incantations des Grottes Abyssales* (Paris: Collège de France, 1990). Mollier's book is the seminal work on the *Divine Spells*. She understandably focuses her translation efforts on the first chapter of the text. Also see Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002) 89-100, in which Strickmann translates large sections from the first chapter.

⁴ CT 53 *Taishang dongyuan beidi tianpeng huming xiaozai shenzhou miaojing* 太上洞淵北帝天蓬護命消災神咒妙經, CT 54 *Taishang dongyuan ciwen shenzhou miaojing* 太上洞淵辭瘟神咒妙經, CT 362 *Taishang dongyuan shuo qingyu longwang jing* 太上洞淵說請雨龍王經, CT 525 *Taishang dongyuan sanmei shenzhou zhai chanxie yi* 太上洞淵三昧神咒齋懺謝儀, CT 526 *Taishang dongyuan sanmei shenzhou zhai qingdan xingdao yi* 太上洞淵三昧神咒齋清旦行道儀, CT 527 *Taishang dongyuan sanmei shenzhou zhai shifang chanyi* 太上洞淵三昧神咒齋十方懺儀, CT 809 *Taishang sanwu bangjiu wudi duanwen yi* 太上三五傍救醮五帝斷瘟儀, and CT 1296 *Dongxuan lingbao bajie zhai suqi yi* 洞玄靈寶八節齋宿啟儀. See Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) 269-272 and 509-514.

⁵ Strickmann 2002, 89.

⁶ Chapter will henceforth be used instead of *juan* 卷. This is much more accessible for those who do not read Chinese and is accurate because each *juan* of the text has a separate title indicating its subject. We should note that the chapters of this text are all of approximately equal length (around twelve

has a brief preface. The text contains several strata that appeared over the course of several centuries. The first chapter appears to be the earliest. Charles Benn states that the first chapter was written between 420 and 479 with chapters 2-10 being written in the late 5th or early 6th century.⁷ He cites Mollier as his source for this, but Mollier herself claims that the first ten chapters were composed in the early 5th century—before 420. Mollier also claims that chapters nineteen and twenty are contemporary with the original ten.⁸ Chapters 11-18 and the preface of the modern version were not compiled until the early Five Dynasties period (907-960) by Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850-933). These differ in form and content from the earlier sections of the text, often lacking the paradigmatic phrase “The Dao said,” which begins each paragraph of the early sections. The later portions also contain many more verse sections—in five or seven syllable lines—than the earlier chapters.

A full account of the history of this text is beyond the scope of this essay and thoughts regarding this can be found elsewhere.⁹ However, several of the methods for dating the *Divine Spells* deserve comment. References to Liu Yu 劉裕 (363-442), founder of the Liu Song 宋 dynasty, are a major reason for dating the text to the early fifth century, but they are found only in the first¹⁰ and twentieth chapters.¹¹

Therefore this method of dating cannot be applied to other chapters. Mollier also

pages of woodblock print). Because a *juan* was a roll of text (one paper scroll) it was an indication of length. This is lost when rendering *juan* as chapter, but if we keep this fact in mind, this translation is entirely accurate.

⁷ See Charles D. Benn, “Daoist Ordination and *Zhai* Rituals in Medieval China,” *Daoism Handbook*, Livia Kohn, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2001) 314-15.

⁸ Schipper 2004, 270 and Mollier, 53.

⁹ See especially Mollier, 27-65.

¹⁰ CT 335 1.3a, 1.9b.

¹¹ CT 335 20.12b6-13a6. Translated in Mollier, 58.

employs the use of terminology specific to the Six Dynasties period (220-589)--for example, *suolu* 索虜 for northern “barbarians”¹²--, the appearance of historical figures from the end of the 4th century¹³, and a reference to the *Nüqing guilü* 女青鬼律 CT 790, which dates from the end of the 4th century, to corroborate claims that the text dates to the early 5th century.¹⁴ The text existed in a recognizable form (with ten chapters) before 664, the date found on the colophon of a copy of the text that was found in Dunhuang.¹⁵

Mollier states that historical references (like the one cited above), preoccupation with eschatology, and style and terminology are the main reasons for dating the 19th and 20th chapters with the earlier sections.¹⁶ Their form is indeed similar to the original ten chapters, but because no portion of them is found in the earliest extant versions of the text, found in Dunhuang 敦煌, it is doubtful that they were originally part of the text. The fact that the Dunhuang fragments¹⁷ and two

¹² CT 335 2.8a2.

¹³ Zhi Daolin 支道林 (314-366) at 4.9b4 and Yin Zhongkan 殷仲堪 (d. 399) at 2.8a10.

¹⁴ Mollier 59-60.

¹⁵ Schipper 2004, 270. Two fragments: P 3233 and P 2444 bear almost identical postscripts stating that they were composed on August 18, 664. These two fragments are very close to the *Daoist Canon* versions of chapters one and seven respectively and are still in excellent condition.

¹⁶ Mollier, 53. This argument is originally found in Yoshioka, Yoshitoyo, *Dōkyō kyōten shiron* (Tokyo, 1955) 195-205.

¹⁷ It is very difficult to speak of a complete version of the *Divine Spells* as found in the Dunhuang caves. There is more than one fragment from Dunhuang that corresponds to the text found in most chapters of the *Daoist Canon* version, but none of these fragments contains a complete version of the text. It is not impossible that one full, ten chapter, version of the text once existed in Dunhuang.

Degradation of the textual fragments is worst at the beginning and end of each roll (*juan* 卷) where we would expect to find information about the fragment’s origin. P 3233 and P 2444, separated in the Pelliot collection and in the text, were actually produced in the same place on the same day.

Details about each fragment containing text from the *Divine Spells* can be found in Ōfuchi, Ninji 大淵忍爾, *Tonkō Dōkyō* 敦煌道經 (Tōkyō 東京: Fukutake Shoten, 1978-1979) 251-295. Ōfuchi’s best reconstruction of the text is as follows (chapter number in parenthesis followed by

other *Daoist Canon* texts¹⁸ speak of a scripture in ten chapters (modern versions say twenty) is further evidence against the inclusion of nineteen and twenty in the earliest strata. Mollier herself seems at least a little unsure about the origins of these two chapters when she concludes that the first ten chapters originated as one homogeneous group in the first two decades of the 5th century and that the later ten chapters and the preface were added at the beginning of the 10th century.¹⁹ She also cites Ōfuchi Ninji as saying that the first ten chapters are the earliest section and that 19 and 20 belong with the later material.²⁰ It is possible that these chapters were written around the same time as the other ten and were circulated separately, but the references to a text in 10 chapters indicate that chapters 19 and 20 were not a part of the text as it was found in the early Tang dynasty.

Because this essay is concerned only with early Medieval China, the later portions of the text, including chapters nineteen and twenty, will not be discussed further here. Also, from this point on, “*Divine Spells*” will refer to the first ten chapters of the *Daoist Canon* version, unless otherwise indicated.

The text and ideology of the *Divine Spells* arose in the fertile religious environment of the Jiangnan region of southern China. Here, the authors of the text and leaders of the associated sect had access to a vast range of religious thought

fragment number): (1) P 3233, (2) P 2959, (3) P 4676, (4) S 3389, (5) P 2752 P 2894, (6) S 930, (7) P 2444, (8) P 2365, (9) P 2793 P 2749 P 3309, (10) P 2366. Some of these fragments (chapter three for instance) are very incomplete.

¹⁸ *Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi* 洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科戒營始 CT 1125 4.6b and *Dongxuan lingbao benxiang yundu jieqi jing* 洞玄靈寶本相運度劫期經 CT 319 4b-5a.

¹⁹ Mollier, 60.

²⁰ Mollier, 52-53. Ōfuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō shi no kenkyū* 道教史の研究 (Okayama, 1964) 445-477. Mollier also covers Ōfuchi's argument that chapters 1 and 5 constitute an older portion of the text based on references to a *Shenhua shenzhou jing* 神化神呪經 in two chapters. See Mollier, 54.

including Celestial Master (*Tianshi* 天師), Shangqing 上清 (Highest Clarity), and Lingbao 靈寶 (Numinous Treasure) Daoism, the occult tradition of southern China (typified in the *Baopuzi* 抱朴子), and Buddhism. Influence from each of these traditions can be seen in the *Divine Spells*, but the ideas found therein seem to have been quite well developed before being recorded. It will be left to other scholars to seek out instances of borrowing from specific texts or and ideologies in the *Divine Spells*. The text was certainly influenced by other, contemporary movements, but should not be the ideology of the *Divine Spells* cannot simply be distilled down to a series of connections between different traditions.

Apocalypse in the *Divine Spells*

The *Divine Spells* is uniformly categorized as an “apocalyptic” text. Undoubtedly, “end-of-the-world” themes form the basis of the text’s ideology and occupy much of the text’s content. Simply claiming that the *Divine Spells* is about an “apocalypse” is somewhat misleading however, as the majority of what we find in the text deals with the practical concerns of healing and salvation. The text is preoccupied with predictions of destruction and, to a much lesser extent, with images of the harmony and prosperity that will follow. The text makes use of several distinct threads of apocalyptic thought that were popular at the time and does not combine these into a coherent set of predictions. The text is clear, however, that whatever form the coming disasters take its power will protect the faithful.

The dominant methods of destruction described in the *Divine Spells* are demonic attack and disease. These two are linked because demons cause and spread disease. It is not surprising then that the *Divine Spells* is primarily concerned with controlling and subduing demons and curing disease. Indeed, rather than foretelling the imminent destruction of the world, the *Divine Spells* provides various means for avoiding the troubling times ahead. Simply by possessing or honoring the text one can be spared from the disasters to come. Disasters of water and fire are also predicted, but the text provides equally adequate means for avoiding these.

The *Divine Spells* never predicts an end to the world we know. It presents a scenario in which suffering and death are widespread, not unlike what we would expect to see if the world were coming to an end. This does not, however, mean that all will die and that the world will be recreated as a paradise. The Most High Lord Lao (*Taishang Lao Jun* 太上老君)—a cosmic manifestation of the Dao—has the happiness and well-being of his followers in mind²¹ and has taken steps to insure their safety. He has sent many of his most powerful subjects to protect the world from the impending demonic invasion. The *Divine Spells* actually turns a potential disaster into a benefit for Daoists by converting the demon armies to the will of the Dao by apprehending and forcing oaths upon the armies' leaders, the devil and demon kings. Daoists now have access to an enlarged pantheon of powerful and vengeful spirits who will protect them from renegade demons and ruthlessly punish any who dare to violate the new order spelled out in the text.

²¹ 8.4a8-9 states, "The Most High is thinking of you and has compassion for you."

A Chinese messiah figure, the Perfect Lord (*Zhenjun* 真君) Li Hong 李弘²² appears several times in the text.²³ The strongest statements regarding Li Hong are found in chapter one,²⁴ the oldest and most important chapter of the text.²⁵ These sections describe the coming of the Perfect Lord and the establishment of a paradise on earth. People will live for 3000 years, they will raise phoenixes, unicorns, and lions as domestic animals, and the world will be in perfect order.²⁶ Indeed, possessing this text and having faith in the Dao are ways of guaranteeing that one will “see” the Perfect Lord. “The Perfect Lord will come down. Evil people will not see him.”²⁷ Heaven will dispatch killer demons to arrest them.”²⁸ “Not seeing,” here, clearly means that they will not be on the earth to experience the Perfect Lord’s coming—they will have been killed in the cataclysms or apprehended by evil demons.

The coming of Li Hong is strongly connected with the *renchen* 壬辰 year,²⁹ the 29th of the sexagenary cycle.³⁰ According to the prophecies relating to Li Hong, after the *renchen*³¹ year the world would be a paradise of sorts. However, in chapter

²² Li Hong is referred to as Muzi Gongkou 木子弓口 in the text, a named formed by dividing the characters *li* and *hong* into two characters each.

²³ 1.4a5, 4.10b6, 5.4a6, 6.7a2, 8.3a10, 9.2a5, 9.2b5,

²⁴ Anna Seidel translates and discusses all of these in “The Image of the Perfect Ruler in Early Taoist Messianism” *History of Religions* (9) 1969, 238-40.

²⁵ Unlike the later chapters, in which ideas are endlessly repeated as if they are new to the reader, concepts found in chapter one are not frequently repeated but are treated as accepted knowledge in later sections. It is not surprising then that later references to the Perfect Lord are fleeting and obviously draw on assumed knowledge.

²⁶ See CT 335 1.10 and Seidel 240.

²⁷ It is clear that evil people are those who do not possess the text or have faith in the Dao.

²⁸ CT 335 9.2b5-6.

²⁹ See examples of this at CT 335 4.10b6, 8.3a10, and 9.2a5.

³⁰ The Chinese used a calendar system that combined characters from two sets, the stems and branches. These pairings create sixty unique combinations before the cycle repeats.

³¹ Based on the dating of the *Divine Spells*, this should have fallen in 392, 452, or 512 CE.

4, just a few lines before a section involving the Perfect Lord, the text says that 80,000,000 devil kings will command 10,000 demons to kill people from the *renwu* 壬午 (19) through *guihai* 癸亥(60) years, a period reaching well into the reign of Li Hong.³²

Also, in several places the text provides predictions for events—mostly the diseases that will be prevalent for each ten-year period and the demons that will bring them—covering an entire sixty year cycle.³³ These sections seem to provide an alternate interpretation of the evil times now facing the world. Rather than proposing a singular apocalypse, these passages suggest that the world has declined fundamentally and will continue to be shaped by the forces of evil. The ambiguity inherent in the cyclical dating system used by the Chinese means that these predictions and those regarding the Perfect Lord are very vague. If certain events don't occur in this cycle, then one can simply claim that they will happen in 60 or 120 years. This makes it very difficult to construct a time line for the impending disasters.

The prophecies of the Perfect Lord are clearly not the primary focus of this text. Instead, as suggested above, they make up one layer of prediction or possible outcome set alongside many others. The text is therefore not consistent in its predictions. Each chapter, and even fragments within each chapter, provides slightly

³² CT 335 4.10b2 (see translation). The text, of course, provides the means for stopping this murder—in this case the fact that the names of the devil kings are known is enough—which is completely unrelated to a messiah.

³³ CT 335 6.4b6-6b6, 9.4a9-5a5. Again, the text reports that these demonic infestations will be controlled by the demon kings, earlier given the duty of controlling lesser demons, without reference to the Perfect Lord.

different descriptions of the world to come. The unifying feature throughout is the power of the *Divine Spells* and its cosmology.

This inconsistency is a key to uncovering the origins of the text. Mollier notes, “The work’s confused and highly repetitive style confirms its oral, mediumistic origins.”³⁴ The text, even in its oldest version, is comprised of fragments, each one paragraph in length, beginning with the paradigmatic phrase “The Dao said.” There is a compelling sense that the Dao, or Laozi, actually spoke these words through a medium. The fact that these fragments are most often independent wholes bearing little or no relation to the surrounding fragments³⁵ indicates that they were revealed separately. That the concerns of these fragments change throughout the text and are often inconsistent with one another indicates that they were revealed over time to a long-lived cult with changing interests and concerns.

We can see in the text contradictory predictions regarding the time and nature of the world’s impending doom. The *Divine Spells* often predicts calamities that will occur in the *jiashen* 甲申 (21)³⁶ year. These events are usually of the *kalpa*-disaster type,³⁷ involving the three disasters (*sanzai* 三災) of fire, water, and wind.³⁸ Flood is the dominant prediction for the *jiashen* year and is usually accompanied by attacks of

³⁴ Schipper 2004, 270.

³⁵ See the translated excerpt for many examples of this feature.

³⁶ See Erik Zürcher, “Prince Moonlight: Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism” *T’oung Pao* 68 (1982): 14-22.

³⁷ On *jiezai* 劫災, see Erik Zürcher, “Buddhist Influence on Early Taoism,” *T’oung-pao* 66 (1980): 128.

³⁸ Wind is never mentioned as a disaster—it is replaced by warfare, literally weapons (*bingdao* 兵刀). CT 335 1.7b4.

demons carrying disease. Regardless of the nature of the calamity, many people will die and the coming of the *jiashen* year was obviously a source of great dread.³⁹

Predictions regarding the *renwu*⁴⁰ year are even more common because it falls ten years before the *renchen* year, which will see the coming of the Perfect Lord and was one date for the beginning of the Buddhist apocalypse.⁴¹ This date is associated exclusively with demonic invasion and disease.⁴²

The predictions regarding these two dates are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, in the world of the *Divine Spells*, any year could see a great natural cataclysm and influx of demonic hordes. These two themes, however, appear to be separate traditions superficially combined in the text. Individual fragments treat these dates independently, only rarely mentioning both. It is likely that the cult surrounding this text received these revelations at different times. Perhaps the prophecies for each increased as these years drew close and faded again when they passed.

The above discussion shows that the *Divine Spells* is a collection of various apocalyptic ideas popular in the early medieval period that does not present a coherent description of the end of the world. Instead, the authors make use of widespread apocalyptic imagery to further their own goal: the spread of the *Divine Spells* and the broad acceptance of the unique cosmology it presents. If this goal could be achieved, the faithful followers of this tradition stood to receive the benefits of increased patronage and possibly official sponsorship (which is to say, of course, money.) The world of the *Divine Spells* is horrific in the extreme, given the presence

³⁹ CT 335 2.2b7, 5.1b10, 3.10b2, and 8.3a5 to list only a few of many examples.

⁴⁰ 壬午, year 19.

⁴¹ See Zürcher 1982, 20.

⁴² CT 335 1.2a6, 2.3a7, 3.2a7, 7.2a5, and 8.3b3 among others.

of innumerable evil spirits obsessed with death and destruction, but it is not a world that is likely to come to an end any time soon.

It is unclear how the *Divine Spells* fits into the worldwide context of apocalyptic thought. There is a problem of terminology to deal with here. Apocalypse is a widely used term that is more appropriate in Western contexts as it is a reference to the *Apocalypse of John*, also known as the *Book of Revelation*. Hubert Seiwert describes the *Divine Spells* as “eschatological,” “[designating] beliefs about the end of the present state and the beginning of a new form of existence.”⁴³ This definition conflates the term with millenarian, which refers to “the belief that the end of this world is at hand and that in its wake will appear a New World, inexhaustibly fertile, harmonious, sanctified, and just.”⁴⁴ This term, however, is also rooted in Western thought as it ultimately refers to the thousand years of peace predicted in the *Book of Revelation*. Accepting a broader definition of this term, following Norman Cohn's usage,⁴⁵ makes millenarian an apt description of the *Divine Spells*, though, at least inasmuch as it refers to the prophecies relating to the Perfect Lord.

There was certainly a history of eschatology in China long before the *Divine Spells* appeared. A type of millenarian thought centered on the power of true ruler and spanning many philosophical schools first appeared in the Warring States Period

⁴³ Hubert Seiwert, *Popular Religious Movements and Heterodox Sects in Chinese History* (Leiden: Brill, 2003) 80.

⁴⁴ Hillel Schwartz, “Millenariansim,” *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Mircea Eliade, ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1987) 9:521.

⁴⁵ “Millenarian sects or movements always picture salvation as (a) collective, in the sense that it is to be enjoyed by the faithful as a collectivity; (b) terrestrial, in the sense that it is to be realized on this earth and not in some other-worldly heaven; (c) imminent, in the sense that it is to come both soon and suddenly; (d) total, in the sense that it is utterly to transform life on earth, so that the new dispensation will be no mere improvement on the present, but perfection itself; (e) miraculous, in the sense that it is to be accomplished by, or with the help of, supernatural agencies.” Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages, Revised and Expanded Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961) 13.

(403-222 BCE). This thought referred back to high antiquity and claimed that the right ruler could bring perfection back to the world.⁴⁶

The first fully-realized millenarian movement in China was the cult of Queen Mother of the West (*Xi wang mu* 西王母) from 3 BCE detailed by Homer Dubs.⁴⁷

The period from the founding of the Latter Han Dynasty to the founding of the Tang dynasty saw a number of movements with varying degrees of messianism and eschatology.⁴⁸ The *Divine Spells* appeared in this milieu and even over 1000 years later, the basic pattern of Chinese eschatology still held:

Like messianic traditions elsewhere, Chinese messianism builds on concrete expectation that one or more saviors will descend to earth to rescue a select group of human beings from imminent or currently raging apocalyptic disasters. These saviors often appear as human rulers, who will subsequently reign over a radically changed world. The disasters include fierce attacks by all kinds of gruesome demons, such as those of plagues and other diseases. The group of elect will be protected from such demons by an army of spirit soldiers. Thus Chinese messianism has both strong political and exorcistic dimensions.⁴⁹

Clearly, the *Divine Spells* fits comfortably within such a conception of Chinese eschatology. However, the *Divine Spells* is also responsible for creating these assumptions as the work by Seidel and Mollier have been highly influential in this field. It is therefore difficult to discern whether the *Divine Spells* was revolutionary or typical based on this scholarship.

⁴⁶ Anna Seidel, "Taoist Messianism," *Numen* 31.2 (1984) 162-3.

⁴⁷ Homer H. Dubs, "An Ancient Chinese Mystery Cult," *Harvard Theological Review* 35 (1942): 222-40.

⁴⁸ See Seidel 1984, 163-73.

⁴⁹ Barend J. ter Haar "Messianism and the Heaven and Earth Society: Approaches to Heaven and Earth Society Texts," David Ownby and Mary Somers Heidhues eds. "*Secret Societies*" *Reconsidered: Perspectives on the Social History of Modern South China and Southeast Asia*. (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1993) 154.

A more interesting question is whether the *Divine Spells* is representative of the forces that shaped eschatology in China or is connected to millenarian movements found worldwide. Norman Cohn's work connecting Western millenarianism to the Zoroastrian tradition revolutionized the field and indicate the real possibility that Chinese movements actually share the same ideological roots as Jewish and Christian eschatology. Livia Kohn acknowledges this prospect but notes that there is no clear historical evidence to support such a conclusion.⁵⁰

Kohn outlines five innovations of Zoroaster that gave rise to millenarian beliefs in the Middle East, each of which is roughly evident in the *Divine Spells*: a personal relationship between the worshiper and deity, a single high god, a linear approach to time, a pronounced dualism between good and evil, and the appearance of a messiah figure.⁵¹ Each of these themes would obviously have to be qualified greatly in order to apply to the *Divine Spells* in a meaningful way. The most important point here is that there is at least historical coincidence to suggest that the *Divine Spells* is connected to millenarian movements outside of China.

Ultimately, however, the *Divine Spells* is a Chinese text that relies on Chinese fears and concerns. It draws on themes popular in the Daoist community but that can also be found in Buddhist and Confucian thought of the day. We must understand that the religious environment that created the *Divine Spells* was one of unprecedented competition. Drawing on the beliefs and fears of others was a benefit to any religious system that sought widespread acceptance. It was most important, however, to convince others that your sect or text possessed effective power far

⁵⁰ Livia Kohn, "The Beginnings and Cultural Characteristics of East Asian Millenarianism," *Japanese Religions* 23 (1998): 29-53.

⁵¹ Kohn, 29-30.

beyond that of any other. On this one thing the *Divine Spells* is clear: only by possessing this text, having faith in its teachings, and supporting its followers and religious professionals could one be safe from *any* calamity, regardless of its magnitude.

Divine spells in the *Divine Spells*

For a text that claims to be about spells (*zhou* 呪), the *Divine Spells* is noticeably lacking spells of any sort.⁵² Given the time period and clear Buddhist influence on the text we would expect to find incantations similar to Buddhist *dharani* (*zhou* 呪) or at least mantras of some kind. Indeed, according to Strickmann, *shenzhou* (translated here as divine spell) was supposed to be the Chinese for mantra. Instead it was used for *dharani* as well, especially in widely circulated texts.⁵³ Where, then, are all of the spells in this *Scripture of Divine Spells*?

It is unclear whether spells would be of any use for the readers of this text. There are no instructions for the use of spells in the text and every use of the term *shenzhou* in the first ten *juan* could be construed as meaning “[*Scripture of*] *Divine Spells*.”

In *juan* four, there is a discussion of talismans (*fu* 符) and their use in healing rites.⁵⁴ In Daoist ritual, the writing of talismans is usually associated with the

⁵² The *Taishang dongyuan sanmei shenzhou zhai chanxie yi*, a related text that dates from around the same period (a copy of this text was found at Dunhuang) containing instructions for the *Zhai* 齋 ritual mentioned in the *Divine Spells* also completely lacks spells.

⁵³ Strickmann 2002, 103.

⁵⁴ CT 335 4.2b4-3a2.

recitation of spells so we would expect to find instructions here about spells. But we find no spells, nor do we find any discussion of them.⁵⁵ Is it possible that the talismans now found with the text were considered spells? Perhaps they were read aloud or represented the physical manifestation of the divine spells. Alas, even this is unlikely as the Dunhuang text lacks any talismans whatsoever, and no special indication of the talismans appearing in the *Daoist Canon* version being spells is found in the captions and summary provided with them. There is nothing out of the ordinary about these talismans and all of the instructions regarding them tell where to hang them or how to eat them.⁵⁶

It is also possible that the divine spells were transmitted orally with a written manuscript of the text. This would have added an esoteric dimension to an entirely exoteric text. Oral transmission would also explain the distinct lack of ritual instruction in the text. If the rites and spells were transmitted outside the text itself there would have been little need record them or attach them to the text. There is, of course, no way to disprove this possibility without contemporary historical accounts of this group's practices, but it seems unlikely to me that a text that repeatedly urges followers to distribute it would not include such important information if it existed. If there were divine spells, they would almost certainly have been written into the text itself so that all could enjoy their power, even the uninitiated. Strickmann's conclusions in *Poetry and Prophecy* support the idea that relevant oral material

⁵⁵ It would not be necessary for the spells to be printed in the text if they were well known. It appears that the talismans printed in the modern version of the text were not originally included. The Dunhuang text has another long paragraph of text where the talismans are found in the modern version. This text does not appear in the *Daoist Canon* version. These talismans were likely distributed in other texts and materials so their inclusion in the text was unnecessary. The spells could have been treated similarly.

⁵⁶ CT 335 4.3-7.

should have been included here: “It is as if even the vitally oral had first to be written, before it could truly exist.”⁵⁷

It is also possible that the entire text was viewed as a spell to be chanted. Many places in the text exhort the reader to chant the text. This is by far the most common ritual instruction found in the text. Daoist texts were commonly chanted in ritual but did not refer to themselves as spells. This interpretation obviously stretches the meaning of spell as we know it, but is certainly not impossible.

Some of this evidence suggests that there never were any divine spells in this text and that no such tradition existed around the text. It is possible that the authors, or whoever coined the term “scripture of divine spells” had no idea what a spell really was. Certainly many Buddhist terms were in use by this time and Daoists often misunderstood, misinterpreted, or oversimplified them. If, as Zürcher claims, “before the fifth century *dharani* did not play a prominent role in the Buddhist scriptures known to the public,”⁵⁸ then it is not surprising that they would be greatly misunderstood.

If we gave the text a different name, Scripture of the Innumerable⁵⁹ for instance, and replaced every reference to divine spells with this name, the text would still make perfect sense and would not seem lacking. It therefore seems likely that this name was attached to the text and its traditions early on—perhaps because spells were in use and perhaps not—and was never replaced, despite the absence of spells.

⁵⁷ Michel Strickmann, *Poetry and Prophecy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005) 95.

⁵⁸ Zürcher 1980, 107. Strickmann claims that *dharani* influenced Daoists as early as the fourth century.

⁵⁹ *Wuliang jing* 無量經. The text refers to itself this way (CT 335 1.1a) and uses several other names for itself.

Religious professionals in the *Divine Spells*

The *Divine Spells* contains a hierarchy of believers quite different from the one found in Daoist communities today. In the text *daoshi* 道士 are clearly the lowest level of religious specialists. They held positions as affirmed members of the community lacking the liturgical power and prestige of higher priests. This power is found in the ritual masters (*fashi* 法師), sometimes called Ritual Masters of the Three Caverns (*sandong fashi* 三洞) or Great Ritual Masters of the Three Caverns (*sandong da fashi*). As their name implies, these ritual masters had access to broader religious and liturgical knowledge. Three Caverns was the name given in this period to Daoism as a whole.⁶⁰ The ritual masters, therefore, had access to rituals such as the *zhai*, the pinnacle of Daoist rites, and spells and talismans not found in the text itself. The text actually places itself within the Three Caverns tradition by saying that it is the highest and should be learned first.⁶¹ Also, given the limited liturgical resources found in the text, it is inevitable that Ritual Masters would have employed texts and rites from other traditions to fill out their repertoire.

We are left with the question: Why should we interest ourselves with this text and its contents? First of all, the text seems to have enjoyed quite a bit of popularity both in its day and later. The work of Du Guangting was mostly of an editorial nature, organizing the whole body of literature that sprang up around the *Divine*

⁶⁰ Mollier, 45-46. This is different from the hierarchy created by Lu Xiuqing 陸修靜 (406-477).

⁶¹ CT 335 4.9b10.

Spells. These texts are mostly liturgical, as the *Divine Spells* was almost entirely lacking this material. Indeed, the appearance of such texts is a strong testament to the widespread belief in the *Divine Spells*—only if people held these beliefs would there be any need for ritual manuals. Also, the appearance of the text, in many fragments, in the caves of Dunhuang is another measure of its success. Appearing in north-west China only two centuries after its genesis puts the *Divine Spells* in the same category as the more widely available (and better studied) Lingbao and Shangqing scriptures.

The *Divine Spells* also gives us a much needed glimpse into the religious world of southern China in the early medieval period. As noted above, the *Divine Spells* contains influences from a wide variety of known sources, and undoubtedly many unknown ones. We can see in the text the traces of thought that appealed to the common folk of the region and captured the fears and hopes of these people.

Finally, the *Divine Spells* presents us with a unique view of the celestial world. This cosmology will be examined in great detail below, so here it is enough to say that the *Divine Spells* contains a view of the divine and demonic that is unique in China and perhaps throughout the world. The clever act of turning rampaging demonic hordes into vengeful protectors makes this text worthy of attention from scholars of Chinese religions and the broader field of religious studies.

The *Divine Spells* contains many entities and ideas of Buddhist origin, so the present study should hold some interest in the field of Buddhist studies. The possible root of the *Divine Spells*' cosmology—the devil kings—are an unabashedly Buddhist group. Clarifying their role in this text will help Buddhologists understand the way Buddhist ideas and figures were perceived by the Chinese when Buddhism was still

making its way into the country. The Daoist trappings of the text should not fool these scholars of its importance. Indeed, as Strickmann⁶² has shown, ideas shared by Buddhists and Daoists were often recorded in dogmatic texts that disguise their origins quite well. The subduing of the devil kings—conversion is, I believe, too strong a word—should be of great interest to Buddhologists and Sinologists in many fields.

The *Divine Spells* is unique among Daoist texts of its time because it was designed to be spread widely. Shangqing and Lingbao texts are famous for the restrictions placed on their distribution, but the *Divine Spells* exhorts believers to circulate it—this being one way of receiving the benefits it promises. The text is accordingly written in a simple, repetitive style accessible to those that were not highly literate. Scholars of Daoism therefore get a glimpse into a different milieu than the Shangqing and Lingbao texts. Also, because the needs and wants of a popular cult likely drove the creation of the text, we can learn much about the religious environment in which it was created.

Summary of Contents

The *Divine Spells* is far too long and varied to consider all of its contents here. Instead I will briefly summarize each chapter so that others might find what interests them there. This should not be confused for a comprehensive summary but rather a tool for further research and context for later discussions.

⁶² See Strickmann 2002, chapter four for his discussion of ensigillation in the *Essentials of the Practice of Perfection* (Zhengyi fawen xiuzhen zhiyao 正一法文修真旨要, CT 1270) and the *Consecration Sutra* (Guanding jing 灌頂經, T 1331).

The first chapter of the text, “Binding Devils,” (*Shi mo* 誓魔) has enjoyed the most attention of any portion of the *Divine Spells*,⁶³ so this introduction will be brief. The chapter begins with a variant of the Buddhist format, giving location—the Highest of the Three Heavens (*santian zhi shang* 三天之上)—and audience—some Perfected (*zhenren* 真人) led by Wei Mingluo 蔚明羅 and a great crowd of gods (*tian* 天) numbering 490,000. Wei Mingluo leads the Perfected in a short conversation with the Most High (*Taishang* 太上) and then describes the situation on earth: The people do not have faith in the Dao, great disasters befall them, etc. The Most High then instructs them to go and help kill the demons causing these problems. The Most High then binds the devil kings to an oath to control the lesser demons and protect the people of the world.⁶⁴

The rest of the chapter describes the conditions of the contemporary world, the ideal world of the past, and the solutions for the current disasters. In this chapter, readers are also introduced to the Perfect Lord and the conditions of his arrival, as well as most of the pantheon that we will encounter later: devil kings, demon kings, deviant kings (*xiewang* 邪王), and lesser demons of all sorts on the one hand; celestials (*tianren* 天人), jade maidens (*yunü* 玉女), divine kings (*shenwang* 神王), stalwarts (*lishi* 力士), and transcendents (*xianren* 仙人) on the other.

⁶³ See Strickmann 2002, Seidel pgs. 238-40, Mollier 94-111.

⁶⁴ This passage will be fully discussed in chapter 2.

Chapter two, “Dispatching Demons” (*Qian gui* 遣鬼), like every other chapter, recapitulates the ideas found in chapter one, but also includes a long section detailing the diseases brought by demons⁶⁵ and describes how these demons will be dispatched. It also expands on the roles of the devil kings and demon kings and states that all of their names are found in this text.⁶⁶

Chapter three, “Binding Demons” (*Fu gui* 縛鬼), explicitly states that the disease demons (*binggui* 病鬼) have been sent by Heaven (*Tian* 天) to spread disease and thereby kill evil people.⁶⁷ The oath sworn by the jade maidens and the wives of the Great Brahma Kings (*Da fantian wang furen* 大梵天王夫人) is found here⁶⁸ along with the names and attributes of some individual demons. This chapter is also of interest because of its hymns.⁶⁹ These look like standard rhyming, pentasyllabic verse but are introduced with the statement: “At that time the Most High spoke in song, saying.”⁷⁰ This line is strongly inspired by Buddhism, especially because of the word *jie* 偈, which is used for Buddhist *gathas*. These hymns do bear a resemblance to *gathas*, but appear much more poetic, as if they are intended to be sung.⁷¹

⁶⁵ CT 335 2.1b9-2b1.

⁶⁶ Some names are given in other parts of the text, but because the number of these kings is astronomical it is not surprising that a complete list is not included.

⁶⁷ CT 335 3.1a4.

⁶⁸ CT 335 3.1a9-b10.

⁶⁹ CT 335 3.2a1, 3.3b4, 3.3b9, 3.5b2, 3.8a4, 3.9b9, and 3.10a5.

⁷⁰ *Ershi Taishang nai shuo ji yue* 爾時太上乃說偈曰.

⁷¹ The text does not explain the significance of these hymns, but they obviously became an important part of the Divine Spells tradition as they are found throughout the last ten chapters and several of the tradition’s later texts. These hymns are certainly deserving of further study both in their religious and literary aspects.

Chapter four, “Killing Demons” (*Sha gui* 殺鬼), which is translated here and discussed at length below, is mostly notable for its ritual instructions (the most precise in the early strata) and talismans.⁷² There are also many names of devil kings, demon kings, and transcendents and more discussion of the Perfect Lord in this chapter.⁷³

Chapter five, “Arresting Demons” (*Jin gui* 禁鬼), is mostly concerned with describing the disasters to come, with emphasis on all of the terrible things that will befall the stupid (*yu* 愚) and evil people and what divine forces are being sent to protect the faithful.

Chapter six, “Binding Spooks” (*shi xiang* 誓[歹+羊]⁷⁴), briefly describes spooks and the means for their salvation. The chapter then begins to describe the demons that will come in great detail. This includes the years of their flourishing, their appearance, origin, behavior, and how they will be defeated—inevitably this is by being beheaded or having their heads smashed by the devil kings or demon kings.

Chapter seven, “Beheading Demons” (*Zhan gui* 斬鬼), much like chapter six, lists more types of demons that will come and describes them. The legions of

⁷² CT 335 4.2b4-7a.

⁷³ CT 335 4.10b6

⁷⁴ This character is not found in any of the standard Chinese or Japanese dictionaries or the Microsoft Chinese character set, though it appears throughout this text. The translation and pronunciation given here are found in Strickmann 2002, pg. 89.

divinities that will aid the faithful are also expanded⁷⁵ and names are given for many great demons (*da gui* 大鬼) and demon kings.

Chapter eight, “Summoning Demons” (*Zhao gui* 召鬼), reframes the disasters in terms of the faithful and evil people. It makes clear that disease is sent explicitly to kill the evil people, who are those who do not possess the text. This chapter also furthers the idea that the *Divine Spells* is the most important Daoist teaching and all practitioners should receive it first.

Chapter nine, “Killing Demons” (*Sha gui* 殺鬼),⁷⁶ seeks to expand the ritual of this traditions by including references to rituals to the Five Thearchs (*wu di* 五帝).

There is also some more discussion of the Perfect Lord here and descriptions of demons. Overall, this chapter is important for its expansion of ritual practices and emphasis on transmission with proper rituals.

Finally, chapter ten, “Killing Demons” (again!), continues themes from other chapters, but also gives a talisman and instructions for its use. There are more ritual instructions here and, of course, demon names and descriptions.

⁷⁵ CT 335 7.2b6-3b1.

⁷⁶ This is the same title as chapter four, but they are very different so it is not possible that they were originally the same.

Chapter Two: The Cosmology of the *Divine Spells*

The *Divine Spells* contains a unique cosmology that makes extensive use of conversion to bolster the ranks of divine warriors under the command of Daoists. We find many spirits familiar from other Daoist and Buddhist texts, but nowhere are they arrayed in such a way. Vile demons and their overlords become the practitioner's best allies and seemingly surpass the gods for sheer strength and efficacy.

This system is outlined throughout the text and is not assumed at the beginning of the text. We should, therefore, first introduce the main figures in this cosmology and identify their roles.

Many good beings appear in the text. Their celestial rank is not always clear, but most are described to some degree. As these beings are already aligned with the worldly Daoists, their roles do not change in the text.

At the pinnacle of any Daoist cosmology sits the Dao, so it is not surprising that the Dao is the source of revelation in this text. Laozi is the highest god in the Daoist pantheon and goes by many names. The Most High and the Celestial Worthy (*Tianzun* 天尊), appear frequently here. Each of these names indicates a different aspect of Laozi and emphasizes different features of his power. These names have been the subject of extended discussion elsewhere so we need not explicate these features here.

Dao is one of the most common words in classical Chinese and is found throughout this text conveying a surprising variety of meanings. Where it obviously refers to the deified Laozi, Dao is only found as the source of revelation, as in the

quote “The Dao said” that introduces each fragment. If this text was indeed revealed through a medium it would have been appropriate to attribute this to the Dao, the most abstracted natural/divine force in the universe. The Most High, on the other hand, appears most commonly in the text to identify the Daoist religion’s highest god. In this use it appears to be the proper name for this god. The Celestial Worthy is more like an honorific and is used often in dialogue between him and other divinities.⁷⁷

The Most High’s⁷⁸ main role in the text is organizer and motivator for other celestial beings, but he is also like a worried father to the faithful below. The Most High is the Lord of all below him. He issues commands to his forces and regulations to be followed by gods, humans, and demons. Failure to follow these laws is met with swift and harsh punishment.

Next, both in status and order of appearance,⁷⁹ are the Perfected (*zhenren* 真人). These exalted divinities were the source of the Shangqing scriptures, so named because the Perfected reside in the Highest Purity (*Shangqing*) Heaven. They figure prominently in the beginning of the text, forming the audience for the Dao’s teaching. One of their number, Wei Mingluo, sets the story in motion by describing the evils he has found on earth. The Perfected are therefore very important to the text’s narrative, but play a small role outside this and do not figure prominently in the action on earth.

⁷⁷ See CT 335 1.1a7.

⁷⁸ Henceforth I will employ Most High to refer to the deified Laozi for both simplicity and accuracy, as Most High is a shortened form of Most High Lord Lao, the name he claimed in the original Daoist revelations.

⁷⁹ CT 335 1.1a3.

Celestials, who are always male, and jade maidens, appear together as often as not, as if they form a natural pair—the yin and yang, if you will. There is a great number of these in the heavens, at least eight trillion.⁸⁰ Celestials and jade maidens accordingly seem like the regular inhabitants of the heavens.

The celestial-stalwarts (*tianding* 天丁) and strong men (*lishi* 力士) are, as their names suggest, the enforcers of the heavens. Almost every reference to them in the text indicates that they are being dispatched to aid Daoists or behead demons. The text is unclear on this point because it never really describes these beings, but it appears that the celestial-stalwarts are a type of being, similar to the celestials and jade maidens. Strong man, on the other hand appears to be a role or position. “Celestial-stalwart strong man” appears as a four character phrase many times, and Yamada identifies this as a compound in his concordance.⁸¹ Celestial-stalwarts and strong men also appear separately quite often and strong man appears in connection with celestial in such a way that would suggest that the celestials perform the role of strong men. For example, “Now I [the Most High], borne on an azure dragon, command celestial strong men [numbering] 480,000 people...”⁸² This quote uses the same grammar as commands issued to the celestial-stalwart strong men. “Heaven dispatched twelve kinds of strong men,”⁸³ also suggests that these combinations represent different types or races of strong men. Regardless of the nature of these names, celestial-stalwarts and strong men are charged with enforcing the Most High’s

⁸⁰ The Most High commands this many to go down to the earth and help the people there. CT 335 1.1b8-2a5.

⁸¹ Yamada, 75.

⁸² CT 335 5.5a5.

⁸³ CT 335 4.7b8.

commands and regulations and their rank is similar to that of the celestials and jade maidens.

Transcendents also figure prominently in the *Divine Spells*. They are referenced most often as the goal of Daoist practice. Those who receive the text will attain the level of (*de* 得) or correspond to (*ying* 應) transcendents. Transcendents are not active in the world like the other divinities.

Divine kings, who are clearly good beings will be understood better once the term king (*wang* 王) is explained in the context of this text. Divine kings, therefore, will be discussed below.

The highest ranking demons in the *Divine Spells* are the devil kings. These beings are clearly borrowed from Buddhism—devil king is one of the Chinese translations of Mara, the Buddhist devil figure. An analysis of the similarities between Buddhist and Daoist devil kings would be enlightening, as would an essay tracking the influences of Buddhist thought on Daoist texts relating to the devil kings. It is my opinion, however, that the devil kings of the *Divine Spells* have little to do with their Buddhist cousins. This is supported by Kamitsuka who states that the devil kings in the *Divine Spells* share just three features with the devil kings in Buddhism: the terms that describe them are borrowed from Buddhist texts, the devil kings “live in a heavenly realm,” and they are subject to death and rebirth.⁸⁴ Clearly, the cosmology built around the devil kings is undeniably Daoist in nature and the devil kings fill their role in this cosmology faithfully.

⁸⁴ Kamitsuka 44.

I do not intend to argue that devil kings have nothing to do with Buddhism. Clearly, without the influx of Buddhist thought into China in the Six Dynasties period, the devil kings would not have appeared in Daoist texts. Also, in other Daoist texts, the *Scripture of Salvation*⁸⁵ for instance, devil kings are portrayed in a way that resembles Buddhist descriptions much more closely.⁸⁶ In the *Divine Spells*, however, the devil kings exist as Daoist entities and we will learn more about their role and position in this text if we focus on what this text says about them, rather than seeking first causes in Buddhist scriptures—a process that would unnecessarily complicate things.

We are introduced to the devil kings very early in the text. Here we discover that the devil kings will come and spread toxins (*du* 毒) that will infect (*bing* 病) living people. Immediately the Dao dispatches constables to apprehend the devil kings and bind them to an oath. Henceforth, they will reign in the lesser demons and will not allow these chaotic forces to harm the people of the world.⁸⁷ Clearly, the devil kings are a threat, are powerful enough to control all of the demons now flooding into the world, and were important to the authors of the text, who placed this discussion so early in the book.

Why are these devil kings so important? First of all, it is clear that the devil kings occupy an exalted position in the celestial hierarchy and are orthodox (*zheng*

⁸⁵ *Du ren jing* 度人經, CT 1. See Bokenkamp 1997, 373-438.

⁸⁶ Kamitsuka 46 reads, “what is noteworthy is that these great *mo* [魔] kings in the *Tu-jen ching* [*Scripture of Salvation*] are closer to King Yen-mo [Yanmo] 閻魔, who is the head spirit of the earth prisons that judge's people's crimes, than King Mo, Māra.” This is obviously a deviation from strictly Buddhist representations, but it also presents devil kings in a more Buddhist light.

⁸⁷ CT 335 1.2.

正) spirits: “The Dao said to all of the divine kings and devil kings, you are indeed the same as my orthodox vapors of non-action.”⁸⁸ They have been reborn in this form as a *reward* for actions in past lives: “In your past lives you lived in great fortune (*fu* 福). Therefore you have attained the position of divine kings and devil kings.”⁸⁹

The title “king” would seem to indicate a position of great authority. Certainly in the West kings are the highest authority. It is clear that the devil kings do not occupy a position similar to a king of England. Instead they are closer to generals or commanders. This militaristic metaphor applies soundly to the structure of the heavens and hells in the *Divine Spells*.

King was a title used widely in the Six Dynasties period and throughout imperial times. According to Charles Hucker, this term, *wang*, is best translated as “prince.”

...after disuse in Qin 秦, revived in early Han 漢 as a title for the founding Emperor’s most important military allies, who were granted large regions of the empire as semi-autonomous Princedoms 王國; from then on, the highest title of nobility, awarded commonly to all sons of Emperors; occasionally throughout history conferred on unusually distinguished military officers. In some dynasties there were many gradations of Princes indicated by prefixes.⁹⁰

Why not, then, call them devil princes? The reasons are strictly practical and deal with the connotations of the English word. Princes are, of course, usually the

⁸⁸ CT 335 2.6a7-8. This passage translates into English awkwardly, but the Chinese is quite clear: 道言一切神王及一切魔王等汝亦與吾無為正氣同矣。

⁸⁹ CT 335 2.6b1-2.

⁹⁰ Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985) 562.

children of the king awaiting their chance to take the throne. Devil kings have reached the pinnacle of their power; they will never ascend to a higher seat.

General is also unacceptable because it implies strictly military power. Devil kings are the masters of their subjects in military matters as in all others. The lives of the demons are in their hands; they are empowered to take the lives of those who do not obey.

So the devil kings do not rule over a specific land, nor are they the highest authority. They do however have control over all aspects of the lives of their subjects and lead them into battle. They are kings who answer to higher powers—perhaps vassals to a supreme power. This corresponds exactly with the Chinese political system, in which “kings” answered to the emperor (*di* 帝).

To confuse the matter further, there are three other types of kings found in the *Divine Spells*: Divine kings, who, as we can tell from the above quotes, are quite similar to the devil kings, demon kings, who are under the command of devil kings, and deviant kings, who are found only in the first chapter, but seem to occupy the same position as the demon kings.

The genesis of these different kings seems to be tied to the devil kings themselves. Devil (*mo* 魔), is rarely found as a single character in the text, while demon and deviant⁹¹ are quite common. The divine kings present a special case as the word god (*shen* 神) is uncommon in the *Divine Spells*; gods are obviously a part

⁹¹ Deviants are, as their name suggests, chaotic spirits that travel through the world disrupting life. Strickmann calls them malignant wraiths (2002, 93), which is an appropriate description. This name deviates from the Chinese, which literally means “deviant,” so this translation is more accurate.

of the worldview of the authors, however. Each of these three types of kings (demon, deviant, and divine) belong to their “racial” group, but are extraordinary in that they possess rare power. Demon kings are demons, but are more powerful than lesser of their race. This is all very simple as it extends naturally from the hierarchical system created by humans. The problem is that it is unclear what a devil is.

Daoists did not import devils from Buddhism with the same vigor as they did devil kings. Clearly in later usage devil is practically synonymous with demon. This is not the case in the *Divine Spells* where devil kings are reborn into their position and demons are most often the unsettled spirits of the deceased.⁹² So as far as this text is concerned devils exist primarily as devil kings. The Daoists, seeing in this term a reflection of the worldly bureaucracy, which had provided such rich inspiration for Daoist cosmology in the past, applied the term to other types of numinous beings.⁹³

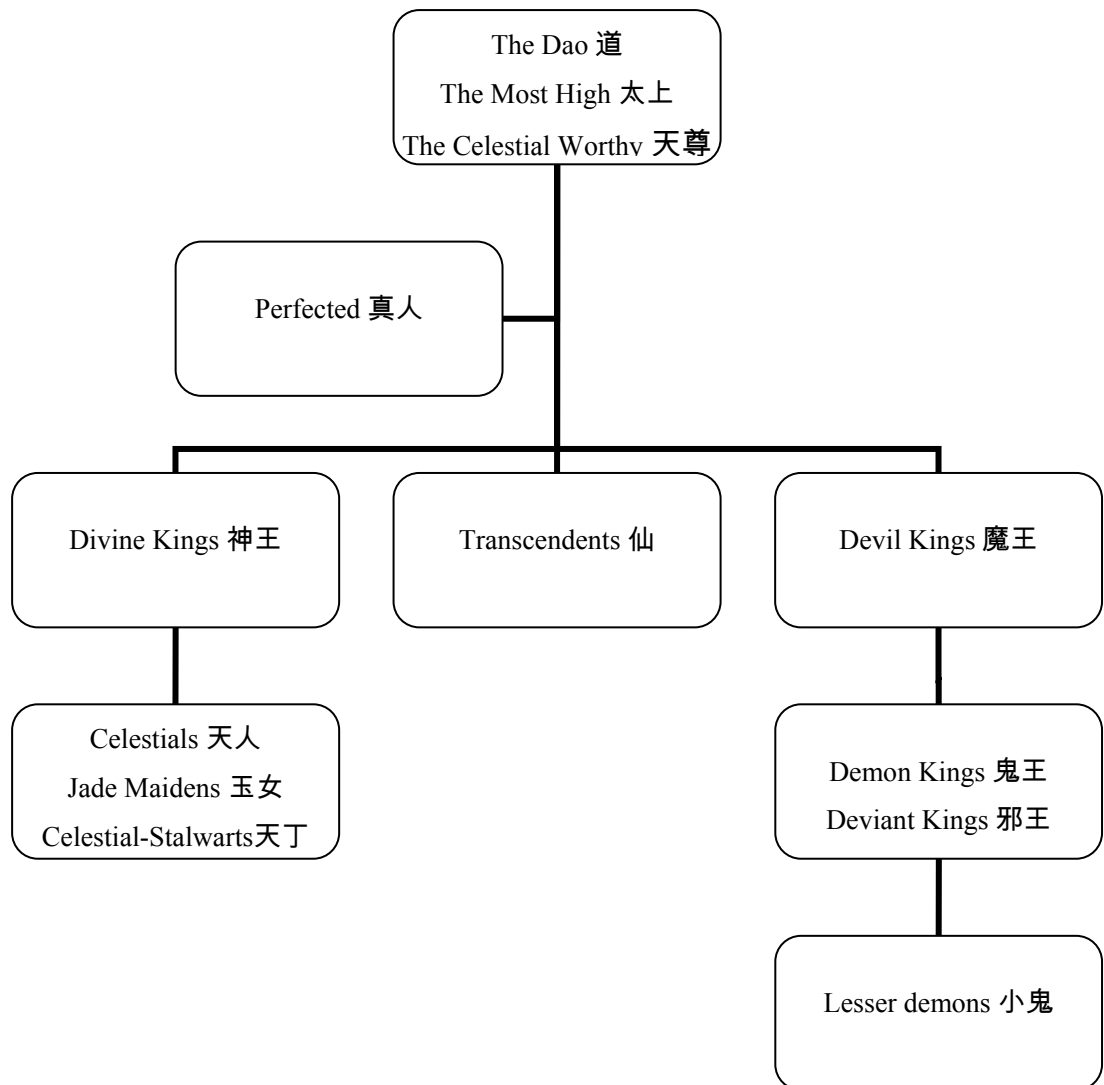
Before their conversion, devil kings, deviant kings, and demon kings led lesser demons into the world to cause illness and suffering among the people. They harass Daoists and are generally mischievous and malicious. Divine kings, the celestial equivalent of devil kings, seek to support Daoists and protect the good people of the world.

The *Divine Spells* is rich in demonological variation. It reports the physical characteristics of a wide variety of demons. Different types of demons are found throughout, with disease vapors (*qi* 氣) of many kinds, and even diseases themselves

⁹² Demons in this text are for the most part revenants or ghosts. *Gui* 鬼 is used for a wide variety of beings, some issuing from the hells, others being trapped in the mortal world after their allotted lifespan has reached its end.

⁹³ Gods and demons are both numinous (*ling* 靈).

being characterized as demonic. Detailing each variety of demon would be an interesting exercise, but in the interest of simplicity we will refer to these as lesser demons (*xiaogui* 小鬼), the convention adopted by the text itself. They are the lowest beings in the universe, in both a moral and hierarchical sense. They can negatively affect living people, but if these people avail themselves of the proper knowledge and practices (available from your local Daoist) they can easily control these malevolent spirits.



Transcendents sit somewhat outside this depiction of the celestial hierarchy as they are for the most part worldly transcendents, not bound by the strictures of the celestial bureaucracy. We must remember that everyone on the right side of the chart ultimately answers to those on the left. Invariably those on the left are defined as belonging to the Three Heavens (*santian* 三天)—the orthodox heavens of Daoism.

The Devil Kings, Deviant Kings, and Demon Kings are described as belonging to the Three Heavens, Nine Heavens, or 36 Heavens. Once, the Deviant Kings are said to belong to the Six Heavens.⁹⁴ We would expect these beings to come from the Six Heavens. This is where the Daoists place popular deities and demons of various sorts. (Popular deities are, of course, demons in the eyes of the Daoists.) The fact that the devil kings and demon kings are not regularly identified with the Six Heavens is a sign that these beings are not purely demonic.

While this cosmology is unique and interesting in its own right, what makes the *Divine Spells* revolutionary is the way it deals with demons. Beginning on the second page of the text, the Dao sends agents into the world to convert the demons to the cause of good. As mentioned earlier, this process begins with the devil kings who are made to swear this oath:

‘From now on, if the people of the land die wrongly, fall ill, are imprisoned, or are forced into slavery, this is because the devil kings did not command the lesser demons (*xiagui* 下鬼) and therefore permitted them to harm the seed people (*zhongmin* 種民).⁹⁵ From now on, by command from the golden mouth of the Most High, if there is one who does not ban them, but causes the people of the land to encounter disease, war, suffering, prison, forced labor, or death, without good reason. These devils kings will first be indicted for not

⁹⁴ CT 335 1.6a10.

⁹⁵ These are the chosen people of Daoism.

regulating the lesser demons. Therefore, they will be beheaded without mercy.’⁹⁶

Later in chapter one, the devil kings are joined by the demon kings and deviant kings in swearing an oath that is both more specific and more conciliatory than the first.

The devil kings, deviant kings, and the demon kings of the realm heard the Most High speak the *Scripture of Divine Spells*. With sorrow in their hearts, they sighed, ‘From the past until now, we have spread evil and opposed the Dao. We have now heard the Celestial Worthy speak these words and will exalt and enact them. If there are people in the world who have received this scripture, we will personally seek them out and protect them. If there are profane demon-marauders who intend to come and attack or bully priests, we will execute them immediately. From this day forward, if those who chant this scripture are infected with illness or experience litigation, we will then aid them and create good fortune for them. If there are those [demons] who do not preserve their oath and, as before, come to attack, smashing their heads into myriad pieces would not be sufficient for an apology.’⁹⁷

Combining these two oaths—one forced on the Devil Kings and spoken in the voice of the celestial officials (*guan* 官) sent to deal with them, the other spoken by the devil, demon, and deviant kings themselves—we have a list of prohibitions and commandments for these beings. They will not cause disease, war, suffering, imprisonment, forced labor, or death without good reason. They will aid (or heal) and create fortune for those who chant the text, and kill any demons who harass Daoists.

Of interest here is the fact that the three kinds of kings express remorse at their previous actions. We will never find an example of the lesser demons (*xiagui* 下鬼 and *xiaogui* 小鬼 refer to the same things) expressing remorse. In fact, as we

⁹⁶ CT 335 1.2a8-2b3.

⁹⁷ CT 335 1.8a2-8.

see in the first oath, the lesser demons are to be mastered and killed if they fail to follow the new strictures placed on them. Their nature is to cause suffering and only under threat of force will they cease this activity. The kings, on the other hand, are capable of remorse and what seems like genuine compassion.

The Dao said: From now on, in the places where this scripture is chanted, if there are evil demons or murderous gods who dare to come and act on evil thoughts towards living people and ritual masters, the demon kings and great devil kings numbering 8,000,000,000 kings have personally sworn to be beheaded three times and have their heads smashed into 30,000 pieces. The devil kings said, ‘From this day forward, if there are priests who are controlling disease by chanting this scripture or are chanting this scripture to create good fortune, we will make things as they wish. We make 10,000 vows to follow their will. There will not be one plan of theirs that does not bear fruit. If one day we violate this vow or one of your followers, even one person, experiences a violation, we will be beheaded 10,000 times.’⁹⁸

Above is another example of an oath taken by the Devil Kings—there are many of these in the text. The power of the spoken word, in this case the oath, is a constant feature of the text. The world of the gods is a very legalistic one, in which commandments and oaths are made and taken with the understanding that failure to abide by them will result in death.

This oath expands on a theme found in the second oath: the devil kings are at the disposal of Daoists. Their ritual acts bring devil kings into the world and once there they act in accordance with the Daoists’ will. This oath also further emphasizes the fact that the devil kings are responsible for the behavior of the lesser demons and swear to be beheaded themselves if they cannot control these demons. This passage is notable for its unusual nature: The devil and demon kings are constantly charged

⁹⁸ CT 335 2.4a10-b5.

with beheading offending demons. They rarely face the threat of decapitation themselves.

The two facts apparent here—that the devil and demon Kings volunteer to be beheaded and that they are so often the executors of punishment—clearly demonstrate the faithfulness of the devil and demon kings. They are not constantly being threatened with punishment if they disobey. The celestial authorities are obviously of the opinion that their new deputies are entirely trustworthy. Clearly, the repentance of these evil beings is sincere. This repentance, of course, results directly from the power of the text itself, which these kings heard spoken by the Most High in the quote above.

The devil, demon, and deviant kings then become the principle tool of the text. The kings are charged with regulating the lesser demons, of course, but their oaths apply specifically to those moments and areas where Daoists chant the text. These places especially are to be free from demonic presence. The texts works as a signal beacon in these situations. The devil kings are called to action by the sound of the text and come down to drive out lesser demons.

This technique, converting the devil kings, is very clever. The Daoists not only appropriate these foreign deities, thereby claiming some of their power, they one up the Buddhist by making these demons into their servants. The text clearly states that, though the devil kings converted before the Most High and ultimately answer to him, the devil kings are at the direct service of Daoists trained in the ritual use of this text.

Powerful demons were excellent tools for drawing followers to a religion.

The threat of demonic attack obviously created great incentive for people to join and support a religion. The *Divine Spells* treats this threat as inevitable. Indeed, the Most High has guaranteed this fact by sending the lesser demons to spread disease among the stupid. (The stupid, being those who do not possess or practice the rituals of this text.) So the world is filled with terrible and frightening demons. Who better to rescue people from imminent death and destruction than the terrible and frightening demons of another religion?

The willing submission of the devil kings is also a testament to the power and truth of Daoist gods and teachings. In a competitive religious environment, the relative strength of your deities is of vital importance. People will not worship one set of gods when another has clearly proven its superiority. The unstated message here is: "This Buddha from India was able to defeat these demons, but our Chinese god so awed them that they willingly became his subjects." Not only this, but the devil kings could become the subjects of anyone trained in the use of the *Divine Spells*.

Chapter Three: Ritual and Reality of the *Divine Spells*

It has been stated that certain rituals were necessary in order for Daoists to avail themselves of the power of the devil kings. This ritual is treated extensively in Chapter Four of the text. This section examines and summarizes this chapter and elucidates this matter of ritual.

Chapter four of the *Divine Spells* stands out mostly for the presence of sixteen talismans and brief instructions for their use. However, as I will show below, the inclusion of these talismans is incidental to the purpose of the chapter. The title of the chapter is “Killing Demons,” one of three chapters that bear this name. The contents are true to their name, though, as the chapter is primarily concerned with describing demons and methods for controlling or destroying them. Accordingly, ritual instructions are provided that will allow Daoists to take advantage of the benefits of this text. This is achieved primarily by alerting the devil and demon kings to one’s presence so that they will come down and kill unruly demons, cure diseases, or protect the faithful.

This section of the text is worthy of analysis not because it is the most important or influential portion—chapter one deserves both of these superlatives—but because it is entirely typical. The concerns expressed in chapter four are echoed in other sections and it is unlike other chapters in the fact that it contains many ideas that are not present in the entire text. The Perfect Lord is one example of this. Lengthy discussions of Li Hong are found only in chapters one, four, and eight. Perhaps most important, though, are the ritual practices that are described in chapter four. The text clearly places a great deal of emphasis on ritual, but gives little instruction to those who would practice this ritual. Chapter four is therefore a unique lens through which to view the world of the *Divine Spells*.

The arrangement of the *Divine Spells* is somewhat chaotic. Each fragment is a self-contained unit that is often unrelated to the fragments that immediately precede and follow it. This organization is not completely random, though. There seems to be some logic to the way the text is organized. A step-by-step analysis of chapter four will therefore be helpful in understanding how the text is organized.

Chapter four is made up of seventeen fragments, plus two fragments that are found only in the Dunhuang version.⁹⁹ These fragments range from twenty-one (fragment one) to two (fragment seventeen) lines in length. Each fragment begins with the words “The Dao said.”

⁹⁹ S 3389 is in better condition than any other Dunhuang manuscript containing text from chapter four. S 1061 and S 3412 are both very short fragments. The text excluded from the *Daoist Canon* version is found at lines 37-61 of S 3389. Interestingly, S 1061 contains only the passage found in S 3389 but excluded from the *Daoist Canon*. This fragment does not appear to have been worn away at the beginning and end, suggesting that this passage circulated independently. S 3412 contains the end of chapter four; the beginning of the fragment was obviously destroyed at some point.

The first fragment of chapter four (4.1a1-4.2a2) establishes the setting—a frightful world filled with the vilest and most terrifying demons. The text seems to knowingly play on the fears of the Chinese by openly displaying the most horrifying beasties. The text explains that all the way back to the time of Fu Xi (30th cent. BCE in the Chinese mythical reckoning) defeated generals have lead huge groups of fallen soldiers back into the world of the living to terrorize the people and spread chaos. Chinese have always been concerned with the fates of those who die in war. Dying away from home, failure to receive proper burial, and having one's body dismembered before death are all potent ways of creating vengeful demons and soldiers are subject to all of these.

The text goes on to describe in great detail the appearance and favorite activities of these demons. They are described as freaks (*guai* 怪) because of their appearance: they posses many features of normal humans, but also lack certain organs such as heads, eyes, and hands. They cause terrible problems that cut short the lifespans of people. They cause disease in humans and domestic animals, destroy crops of rice and silk, and cause unrest among relatives.

Additionally, profane masters (*su shi* 俗師) are to blame for the miserable circumstances found on earth. Their unorthodox divination causes calamities in the world.

Returning to the demons of the world, the text clearly conveys the idea that these are the lowest creatures to be found. They have no redeeming value and their

karma reflects this, descending constantly, guaranteeing that they will never find happiness.

Many chapters in the *Divine Spells* begin in this way, describing the utterly hopeless situation the people of the world face. Establishing the scene in this way is an effective rhetorical tool. Before the text gives readers any hope it first strips them of all hope they might have possessed previously. From this point on, all goodness is a direct result of the text and its magical powers.

Just when we are told that the people of the world will only live out half of their allotted lifespans the text provides a glimmer of hope from the most unlikely place: the demons themselves. The devil kings and their lieutenants, the demons kings, will descend in great numbers to rid the world of the vile monsters described above. And, in the ultimate twist of fate—one which the *Divine Spells* regularly employs—the Dao will dispatch dead generals of his own to behead the dead generals that terrorize the world.

The second fragment (4.2a2-b3) lists the types of demons that the Dao has taken control over and how they are expected to react to this. The approach here is legalistic: the Dao has issued commands to these demons and they are bound by these. If they fail to comply no punishment short of death will suffice. We should also understand that these commands are only effective because they are made by virtue of the power of the *Divine Spells*. The gods of the scripture—namely the devil kings and demon kings and the many celestial beings described above—will carry out the punishments and insure that all commands are followed exactly.

The demons found in this second fragment are just as frightful to the Chinese as those found in the first. There are demons of the “barbarians” of outlying regions and of natural features like the elements (fire and water) and mountains, valleys, and trees. These all lie outside the Chinese sphere of control and are thus unorthodox and chaotic. Special attention is also given to demons that cause legal entanglements and slander, fates equally as frightening as disease and early death—indeed, legal entanglements often led to an early death. The *Divine Spells* will grant relief to anyone suffering from these types of misfortune.

The third fragment (4.2b4-3a2) is short (only nine lines) but extremely important to understanding the *Divine Spells*. It details the rituals that should be performed for the sick. It begins by stating that priests (*daoshi* 道士) will be appreciated for their ability to cure disease. This undoubtedly means that the people of the world will be willing to pay handsomely for the rituals of Daoists.

The priest must enter the sick person’s home and create talismans to hang in various places. The talisman of the Dao of three and seven should be eaten by the priest and fed to the sick person six times each day. In the courtyard of the house, the priest should send up his petitions (*zhang* 章) three times, chant the scripture, and Walk the Path. Those able to perform a *zhai* 齋 ceremony should do so following the laws—apparently these rules are recorded elsewhere or make up the basic training of a ritual master. If one cannot perform a *zhai*, one should perform a ritual and

venerate a priest. Finally, one must spread the merit (*bu shi* 布施) or the ritual will have no effect because the gods of the scripture will not aid the priest.

Here, we must take a short detour from our journey through the contents of chapter four. The fragment detailed above is vital to understanding the ritual of the *Divine Spells*, and by extension, the effectiveness of the entire scripture.

The priest is instructed that in order to heal an ailing person s/he must first write talismans in red ink and shake them twelve times at the gate, windows, well, and in the kitchen before hanging them. Each of these locations is significant to the Chinese. First of all, the gate and windows are areas of transition where evil spirits would gain entry to the home. Controlling these locations is vital to securing and protecting a dwelling. Secondly, the well and kitchen are the sources of water and food. Demonic infestation is also common in these locations. The talismans that should be used in this process are not specified in the text. The only talisman that is actually mentioned in the text is the talisman of the Dao of three and seven.

Seemingly separate from the magical practices involving talismans is the section detailing ritual practices. In order to properly understand this section we must make sense of four terms: *zhang* 章, *zhuanjing* 轉經, *xingdao* 行道, and *buxu* 步虛.

In the context of Daoist ritual, *zhang* typically means “petition.” “Petitions were documents, in form based on state officials’ communications to the monarch, that were ritually dispatched by Daoist priests on behalf of their parishioners to celestial officials, especially for the purpose of healing illness.”¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Bokenkamp 230-1.

Zhuanjing has been translated as “circulate the text.”¹⁰¹ At first glance this translation seems to work for this text, which is preoccupied with being distributed as widely as possible. Even this translator was certain that this compound indicated that the text was to be distributed. However, on closer inspection we see that *zhuanjing* is a ritual action. Certainly as we find it in chapter four, *zhuanjing* indicates a ritual action that is to be performed in a small area (the courtyard of a home) with few people present—and we can infer that those present are already believers. *Zhuanjing* should therefore be read as “chant the scripture,” following the Buddhist usage of this term. Reading each occurrence of this compound in context allows no other interpretation. This reading is also employed by Schipper.¹⁰²

Xingdao poses a more daunting problem. The obvious meaning of “to practice the Way” is not acceptable here for the same reason that *zhuanjing* cannot mean “to circulate the scripture.” We must read this section as referring to specific ritual behavior, not broad actions practiced outside the ritual area. We may follow Schipper in reading the term as “perform a ritual.”¹⁰³ The limited dictionary definitions available support this reading.¹⁰⁴

Finally, *buxu* literally means Pacing the Void. This is a ritual that originated around the same time as the *Divine Spells*.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, in his analysis of this phenomenon, Schipper cites the *Divine Spells* as an early example.¹⁰⁶ Chapter four

¹⁰¹ Kamitsuka, 42.

¹⁰² Kristofer Schipper, “A Study of *Buxu*: Taoist Liturgical Hymn and Dance,” Tsao, Pen-yeh; Law, Daniel P.L., eds. *Studies of Taoist rituals and music of today*. (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1989) 112.

¹⁰³ Schipper 1989, 112.

¹⁰⁴ Li, Shuhuan 李叔還, *Daojiao da cidian* 道教大辭典 (Taipei: Juliu tushu gongsi, 1979) 558.

¹⁰⁵ Schipper 1989, 111.

¹⁰⁶ Schipper 1989, 112.

gives us very little insight into the performance of this ritual, but a passage in chapter seven is more illuminating.

The Dao said: If there is a sick person in a home, or if there is a criminal who has been imprisoned or an initiate is afraid of death, then you should first hold this *zhai*. The *zhai* officials can number three, five, seven,¹⁰⁷ or eight people. They should lay out the population register. If in a Pure Chamber, prepare and lay out the three treasures, an incense lantern, and the utensils for an offering. These must be completely gathered and ordered. Then invite ritual masters of the Three Caverns. From the ritual masters present, select the one that is most intelligent and understands most clearly to be the Master of the Ritual (*fashi* 法師). He will sing the rite with the patron (*zhuren* 主人). Each sits upon a high platform (*gaozuo* 高座). One person, atop the high platform, chants the name of the deity. This is the patron. The remaining priests, one after the other, move around [him]. The ritual master atop the high platform holds the Pacing the Void and begins to harmonize [with the patron]. Those below move around slowly. [As he sound] gets higher, [everyone] looks up to Heaven and listens to the great sound in the clouds. This is like hearing an echoing sound, like the singing of the celestials in the palaces of the Realm of Mystery (*xuan jing* 玄景).¹⁰⁸

We can clearly see that Pacing the Void is a ritual with both somatic and verbal components. The most important scripture on this ritual, the *Lingbao Scripture on Pacing the Void at Jade Metropolis Mountain* (*Dongxuan lingbao yujing shan buxu jing* 洞玄靈寶玉京山步虛經, CT 1439), contains many verses to be chanted when performing this rite. These verses are referred to as both *shou* 首 and *zhang* 章. They are also undeniably similar to the short hymns found in the *Divine Spells*. They are invariably of pentasyllabic lines, are of varying lengths and mostly

¹⁰⁷ The text says ten (*shi* 十) but this is likely a corruption of seven (*qi* 七).

¹⁰⁸ CT 335 7.9b1-10. Schipper's translation of this passage was used for reference. See Schipper 1989, 112.

rhyme every other line. The content of the hymns found in the *Divine Spells* is not related to those of the Lingbao scripture, but the form undoubtedly traces its roots back to this ritual.

No hymns appear in chapter four of the *Daoist Canon* version of the *Divine Spells*, but a version of chapter four found at Dunhuang contains one such hymn in close proximity to the section of ritual instructions. The *Daoist Canon* version of the text contains sixteen talismans, but these are not found in the Dunhuang version. Instead we find a section of text of equivalent length that seems out of place.¹⁰⁹ The form—four-character parallel prose—is highly literate and very different from the easy, almost oral vernacular found throughout the text. Additionally, this section shows unmistakable Lingbao influence, relating a version of the creation of the Lingbao scriptures. That we should find Lingbao influence in this text is not surprising, but that this should appear so blatantly is.

The hymn found towards the end of this section is clearly a continuation of the text preceding it. This style is reminiscent of the Lotus Sutra, which contains many verse sections that recapitulate the prose sections before them for ease of memorization. Such an influence does not clearly explain the existence of these hymns because they are recognizable as pentasyllabic Chinese poetry, with a predictable caesura between

¹⁰⁹ *Juan* 卷, translated throughout as chapter, has a meaning beyond that conveyed by “chapter.” For the Chinese, *juan* indicated length: one roll of bamboo strips or one scroll of paper or silk. If there were several sections within a *juan*, they were called “chapters” (*pian* 篇). The fact that the chapters in the *Divine Spells* are each one *juan* in length is convenient, but not necessarily the norm. The fact that the Dunhuang and *Daoist Canon* versions of chapter four of the *Divine Spells* are the same length despite the fact that they each contain lengthy sections not found in the other is testament to the connection of *juan* with length. If something was added an equal amount was removed. This partially explains the fact that the talismans are not found in the Dunhuang version alongside the added text. We cannot know, however, which convention was earlier. It is possible that the version found in Dunhuang was being circulated by Lingbao practitioners and they felt it necessary to include a section connecting the text to their mythology and removed the talismans to make room for this.

the third and fourth syllables of each line. These hymns also do a poor job of summarizing previous content.

The similarity with the Pacing the Void verses found in CT 1439 would suggest that these hymns have a ritual purpose, but no ritual instructions are given and they are not clearly connected to the few sections of the text that detail rituals.

The talismans found in the *Daoist Canon* version deserve discussion here. As mentioned above, only one talisman is actually discussed in the text; this talisman appears as the last of the sixteen included here. The talismans are preceded by a short paragraph of inset text explaining each one and each talisman is accompanied by a brief caption. These notes do little to explain the appearance or power of the talismans; instead, they provide instructions for their use. For instance, the first and second talismans are to be hung above gates and the third above windows. The fourth through eleventh talismans are designed to be hung on the eight sides of the home (east, southeast, etc.). The twelfth is for hanging in the courtyard, the thirteenth above the stove, and the fourteenth above the toilet. The fifteenth is to be taken in water and the sixteenth should be eaten.

The text (exclusive of the notes discussed above) lists five uses for talismans—hanging above the gate, windows, well, and stove, and eating. Specific talismans are provided for all of these except for the well.

The only talisman specifically mentioned in the text is the sixteenth. The notes regarding this talisman are slightly corrupted: the text refers to the talisman of the Dao of three and seven, the inset paragraph of instructions names it as the talisman of the Dao of twenty-one (*er shi yi dao* 二十一道), and the caption below it

says the Dao of two and seven. Because three times seven is twenty-one, the first two references are roughly equivalent. The third name, however, must be a corruption and should read the same as the first.

Because Daoist talismans are for the most part stylistic elaborations on Chinese characters they can be read by one trained in the skill. The nature of these elaborations varies from straightforward calligraphy styles to fanciful Daoist inventions that are only legible to experts. These talismans usually contain stern commands to demons. Curing disease was mostly an exorcistic process, so many order demons to depart immediately. This can be seen in the seventh and ninth talismans, which contain the Chinese character *chu* 出, or leave. The word for demon (*gui* 鬼) is recognizable in many variations in several talismans, as is the word for water (*shui* 水). The third talisman also contains a representation of the big dipper. These observations are admittedly very elementary, but further speculation on the meaning of these archaic and obscure religious symbols would be irresponsible without further knowledge and training.

After the talismans the text continues and makes no further reference to them. Instead, we find a fragment (4.7a6-b6) stressing the power of the text to heal diseases and remove governmental problems. This fragment begins with the statement that Ritual Masters of the Three Caverns are the highest of the ritual masters. This statement assumes that readers understand that ritual masters must receive this text in order to become Ritual Masters of the Three Caverns.

This is followed by more admonitions to demons and gods of all kinds. The text is perfectly clear that orders issued therein are not to be taken lightly. The responsibility for enforcing these commands again falls to the captains of the demons, the demon kings. The devil kings are not mentioned here despite the fact that we would expect them to be. Throughout the text, such omissions are common. The reasons for these omissions are many and we should not assume that either chance or textual corruption have influenced this.

The next two fragments (4.7b7-8a4 and 4.8a5-a9) introduce a new type of demonic being: the *lianzi* 連子, spreaders. As their name indicates, these malicious vapors are closely tied to disease. The discussion of them follows a pattern seen throughout the text. First, we are told that they exist and are a primary reason for the sad state of the world. Then, we are immediately informed that Heaven has sent forces to deal with them. Henceforth, they will protect and aid Daoists by fighting disease; if they fail to do so they will be beheaded without mercy. Only after we are reassured that these demons pose no further threat are we told of the true danger, which, of course, relates to disease: the *lianzi* cause serious illness and eye pain with their poisonous vapors.

Next (4.8a10-b5), we discover that the world is in much worse shape than we previously believed. All good people and kings¹¹⁰ who had faith in the Dao have already risen to Heaven. Only those who have earned great merit in their past lives will see or hear—encounter—the teachings of the Three Caverns. These statements are very similar to ones we would find in Buddhist texts about the end of the Dharma

¹¹⁰ Kings (*wang*) here refers to earthly rulers, not celestial beings like the devil kings.

(*mo fa* 末法). The text, however, remains true to its traditions and reassures us by insisting that the devil kings will come to aid Daoists who chant this scripture. They must help cure disease or face decapitation.

As if to prove that the text is not organized in a completely random way, the next fragment (4.8b6-9a1) informs us that because so few people have faith in the Great Law (*dafa* 大法), the world is filled with sinners. This statement is the direct result of the above statement that all of the good people have left the world. We also find a reference to hells here. The *Divine Spells* contains surprisingly few such references. Hells were obviously not an important part of the cosmology of the *Divine Spells*, even as a source for the innumerable evil beings listed throughout.¹¹¹ The problems that face humanity are a particular condition of earth and the solutions can be found in the heavens. The hells are mostly irrelevant, as the few references to them in the text clearly show that they exist.

Here we also find protectors of the text being mentioned by name. The personal names listed must be of historical figures of great power but questionable morals as all are identified as either demon or devil kings who led hordes of demons to evil acts before their conversion. We also find demon and devil kings that have celestial names like the Great Devil King of Purple Perfection (*da mowang zi zhen* 大魔王紫真).

¹¹¹ Kamitsuka 43 cites the “lack of systematic accounts of the so-called earth prisons [*diyu* 地獄]” in the *Divine Spells* and mentions that references to these hells appear in the text but are unclear.

In the following fragment (4.9a2-a10) we find more admonitions to demons. From now on they will aid people instead of hindering them and face dire consequences if they do not. Next, there is a list of many different types of demons, the types of misfortunes they spread, and the names of the demon kings who lead them. We discover that *only* by converting the demon kings and their soldiers to the side of good will we be able to cure the powerful diseases they spread.

Transcendents make a prominent appearance in the next fragment (4.9b1-b9), with a long list of historical personages who have attained transcendence in the past. Most of these names are lost to history, but all of the lesser serve Du Lanxiang 杜蘭香, a famous female transcendent. We are told that the faithful will meet these figures face-to-face. This section does not openly state that practicing this text will lead to transcendence, but other sections do.

This fragment also presents some more rewards for earnest practice. We see here that the devil kings, who have caused so much suffering, will be placed under the direct control of the Daoists who follow the teachings of this text. Additionally, wherever this text is chanted and its rituals performed, devil kings will willingly subjugate themselves. If they do not they will be beheaded.

The next fragment (4.9b10-10a8) also relates to the devil kings and contains a powerful statement about the text's efficacy. This text is the most essential of all of the teachings of the Three Caverns because it has the power to subjugate the devil kings. The text's unique cosmology is the key to its power—controlling the captains of evil makes the Daoists who practice this text the most powerful. This fragment and the next (4.10a9-b5) also list names of devil and demon kings and further

expound on the notion that they are now controlled. The names are important here because they are a tool used to control. Because we know the names of the devil and demon kings, they are no longer able to cause suffering and death.

The Perfect Lord makes an appearance in the next fragment (4.10b6-11a1). We find a brief statement about the world after Li Hong's arrival, which will occur in the *renwu* year. He will rule all the people of the world and convert the stupid people.

Here, the text clearly states that stupid people are those who are not Daoists and have not received the [scriptures of the] Three Caverns. They will die in flood and war. The faithful, on the other hand, will be protected by the devil kings.

Chapter four ends (4.11a2-a6) with more stereotypical commands and threats to demons followed by the legalistic statement "Swiftly, swiftly, as the ordinances command." The final fragment is only one sentence and should not be a fragment itself. The Dunhuang version has this sentence attached to the end of the previous fragment.

The contents of this chapter are varied and the narrative is very disjointed and repetitive. This repetition makes the key points obvious: Demons are flooding the world and will attack and kill people with many means, especially disease. These demons will disproportionately target the stupid and evil people, i.e. those who do not possess this text or have faith in the Daoist religion. The Most High has converted the most powerful demons to protect the faithful. Those who are who received this text and are trained in its rituals (Ritual Masters) can call down these devil and demon kings to protect themselves and others from harm and cure disease. The faithful

(Daoists) should support and revere the Ritual Masters and call on their services to avoid illness and suffering and to remove disease or other entanglements.

Conclusion

The *Divine Spells* provides a glimpse into a time of great turmoil. When the text was being composed, China was wracked by political and social upheaval. Violence and open war were widespread. The northern states were ruled by a series of foreign dynasties and, especially toward the end of the Jin Dynasty, the south was “governed” by a string of puppet emperors who had relinquished all real power to bureaucrats and warlords.¹¹² The text therefore shows us how one group of people sought explanation for the change they saw around them. This change was obviously a source of great fear, as reflected in the numerous descriptions of demons that have come to spread the most terrible kinds of havoc among the people. But this change was also seen as an opportunity for the faithful: access to the newly converted devil and demon kings gave practitioners power and authority that was unknown before. Those who possessed the text could now command the most powerful demons against the innumerable lessers who were spreading disease and death across the world.

The text provides a reason for the troubles that faced the people: This flood of demons was not just allowed by the celestial authorities, it was ordered. The Most High sent the demons into the world to kill evil (*e* 惡) and ignorant (*yu* 愚) people. This punishment is not limited to the immoral and sinful. Anyone and everyone who

¹¹² For a concise summary of the relevant historical facts see Erik Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest of China* (Leiden: Brill, 1959) 110-113 and 154-156.

does not have faith in the Dao (*xin dao* 信道) is evil and will meet an unfortunate end.¹¹³ Additionally, the text clearly states that most everyone in the world is evil or ignorant¹¹⁴ and that any people with a trace of goodness are actually celestials.¹¹⁵

The gods and other supernatural beings sent into the world are not here to protect the common people.¹¹⁶ Their only responsibility is to protect and cure those who have faith in the Dao and in this text and hire Daoist priests to perform rituals on their behalf. We can see in Chapter Four and throughout the text that great violence is in store for demons who infect Daoists or who do not leave when commanded by a priest, but their actions towards anyone not affiliated with the Three Caverns or this text are explicitly sanctioned by the Most High himself.

The text therefore presents a very simplistic understanding of the nature of evil and suffering: anyone who suffers at the hands of demons clearly deserves what they get because they did not have faith in Daoism. There is a simple solution to this suffering, available both pro actively and reactively—hire a Daoist priest to chant the *Divine Spells* in your home or your community.

Evil in the *Divine Spells* is not a supernatural phenomenon. It is born of the simple ignorance of the world. Indeed, ignorance to the teachings of Daoism is the only truly evil thing in this cosmology. While the text repeatedly identifies demons as evil, their function is not opposed by the forces of “good.” They were sent into the world by the Most High and answer to captains sworn to his service. They face

¹¹³ Examples of this line of thought are too numerous to list. See especially 3.1a, 1.4a10, and 5.1a6.

¹¹⁴ The terms evil people and ignorant people are so frequently defined the same way (i.e. people who do not have faith in the Dao) that their meaning becomes conflated and the terms appear interchangeable.

¹¹⁵ CT 335 1.5a1-2.

¹¹⁶ CT 335 2.5b3.

penalties for overstepping orders (like soldiers sent into a war zone commanded not to kill civilians), but are given free reign to do as they will to the people of the world.

The devil kings, then, occupy an unambiguous position. As protectors of the text and subordinates of its bearers they are carrying out the Most High's commands, however grim those might be. Even as leaders of the lesser demons they are performing good by helping rid the world of evil people and punishing the ignorant. They are a threat to order if left unwatched, but the heavens are filled with celestials and strong-men occupied with enforcing the Most High's orders.

In this way, the salvation of the *Divine Spells* is political in nature. The world awaits the arrival of the Perfect Lord who, as a divine emperor, will rule a world of prosperity and peace. Until then, the empire is being prepared by warlords (devil kings) and soldiers (lesser demons) who will wipe out resistance and bring order to the chaos. This is a message to the leaders of the Jin Dynasty: crush resistance to political authority by any means, punish those who choose the wrong side, and bring order to the empire.

The primary theme throughout the *Divine Spells* is that this text is the key to salvation. While good behavior and charity are recommended, those alone will not be sufficient to save anyone. Only by believing in the text and sponsoring or performing the rituals described therein can one be assured of “seeing” the Perfect Lord. Salvific power is therefore completely wrapped up in the text itself.

Appendix: Chapter Four, “Killing Demons”

The Dao said: From the time of Fu Xi 伏羲 on, defeated generals of failed armies have assembled troops with mangled forms, reeking of death from knives and weapons, myriads of myriads in a swarm. Some are exposed corpses, bones and joints separated, their heads and bodies in different places; whether flying or floating, their essences and gods cannot coalesce. Some have a body but no head, feet but no hands, a mouth but no eyes. By the thousands, myriads, or millions, they roam or tarry, keeping their own counsel. Residing in the mountains or hiding in trees, they cut short people's lives. When people do not know enough about them, they will plague and disorder the hearts of people. Always looking for a chance to curse, they curse and exhaust the fields and silkworms, so that everything is unlucky. They cause anger among people's immediate and extended families, causing them to give rise to heretical views. They cause the living, old and young, to suffer chronic and acute ailments, their six domestic animals to suddenly die, slander and legal entanglements, [disasters of] water and fire to repeatedly arise, and people to have ill fortune. This is all because of you profane demons who have died in foreign lands.¹¹⁷ They stroll in the clouds among the sons of the Li family. Floating through the clouds they go back and forth to the sea. East, west, south, and north, they are carried on the winds riding sparrows, snatching people's animals, and birds and beasts. They recklessly cause disasters and wrongfully kill living people, seeking their bloody vittles. The divination of profane masters spreads fear among living people. They divine the words of [dead] relatives; all of this produces these calamities. They succeed in creating a profane Dao. You lesser demons hear this: when you cast a

¹¹⁷ People who die away from home do not benefit from normal burial rituals and accordingly are much more likely to haunt the living.

stone from a cliff it cannot help but descend. When you pile one ill-omened thing atop another. Everywhere you go there is sorrow and you harm people's innocence of character. I often say to myself 'When you come to this, half of the world's people will die unjustly.'

From this day forward, great devil kings numbering 48 billion kings will each possess 8 billion lesser kings, each of whom will descend and gather groups of all of the world's lesser demons. Because they make the patron suffer acute and chronic illness, the patron is now ill and in distress. His illness is so severe that he fears he will not live out his complete life-span. You, quickly snatch the demons of the infected person and expeditiously take them one thousand miles away. If you do not follow this order, I will dispatch a great dead general with an army of 9 billion people who will pursue you stage after stage and behead you without mercy and the devil kings will all urgently straighten you out.

The Dao said: From now on, if there is slander directed towards someone, then, as for the one who spoke it, The Officer of Highest Yin with 140,000 soldiers will kill you jealous demons.¹¹⁸ If there is one who has legal entanglements or lawsuits or is imprisoned, then the Respected Directing Lord and 720,000 soldiers who will kill you restraining demons.¹¹⁹ If there is who suffers from vapors of water and fire, I will dispatch Song Jiu and Wenchang to command an army of 280,000 wind and water generals to kill them. I command the scattered Dingling¹²⁰ ghosts, the tree fruit

¹¹⁸ The jealous demons being those who initiated the slander.

¹¹⁹ Lit. "wood and rope, ladle yoke demons" 木索斗枷之鬼 *musuo doujia zhi gui*. A *musuo* is a device made of wood and ropes designed to restrain criminals. A *doujia* is a ladle-shaped device that is worn around the neck to restrict movement of a criminal's head. It is therefore not surprising that these "restraining" demons are associated with legal entanglements, lawsuits, and imprisonment.

¹²⁰ The Dingling were a minority group in the northwest of China and a vassal to the Xiongnu 匈奴.

demons of mountainous regions, demons who fled death in great calamities, six domestic animals in human form demons, the one hundred sprites of the five trees demons, the Man, Yi, Di, and Yao demons,¹²¹ the catiff demons of the northern Di and Qiang,¹²² mountain demons, valley demons,¹²³ water demons, fire demons, the ten thousand kinds of archer lord demons, the twelve chaotic disease demons, the demons of domestic animals and slaves, the self-mutilating and suicide demons, and all great and small demons to go one thousand feet into the ground and never return to cause people illness and suffering. [And I have also commanded] those demonic vapors who caused legal entanglements to scatter. Those who do not leave will be beheaded without mercy.

The Dao said: From this day forward, priests will control disease for the benefit of people. The families of infected people will welcome you. You will first create talismans and place them in the twelve directions and at the gate, door, well, and by the stove. Write each of them in red and hang them. Also make twenty-one swallowed talismans. Three times each day, give it to the sick person to eat; [they should] also eat it three times each night. In the middle of the courtyard, the priest should face north and submit an oral petition three times. You should request permission to chant the scripture and perform the ritual, and Pace the Void three times. If you are not able to perform a great *Zhai* ceremony, then simply look to a priest to perform a ritual three times during the day. If you are able to perform a great *Zhai* ceremony, then [proceed] one by one as the law states and speak of charity.

¹²¹ The Man 蠻 and Yi 夷 are indigenous groups of southern China.

¹²² The Di 狄 are an indigenous group found in the north of China. The Qiang 羌, however, were located to the west.

¹²³ 山下鬼 *shan xia gui*.

When the celestial divinities created people, they did so out of charity. If one does not perform charity, the deities of this scripture will not assist you and they will not cure the people who are ill.

16 Talismans

[Written on] white undyed silk with vermilion ink. Place them according to the quadrant that they protect. Numbers one and two are to be hung [above] the great gate. Number three is [to be hung] on the door. Number four is [to be hung] in the east. Number five is [to be hung] in the southeast. Number six is [to be hung] in the south. Number seven is [to be hung] in the southwest. Number eight is [to be hung] in the west. Number nine is [to be hung] in the northwest. Number ten is [to be hung] in the north. Number eleven is [to be hung] in the northeast. Number twelve is [to be hung] in the family's courtyard. Number thirteen is [to be hung] above the stove. Number fourteen is [to be hung] above the toilet. Number fifteen is to be placed in water and given to the sick person to drink. For number sixteen, make twenty-one of them and take them three times in the day.

The Dao said: Now there are great Ritual Masters of the Three Caverns. Of all the Ritual Masters, these are the most exalted. If there is a priest, male or female, in the three worlds who has received [this title], demon kings will protect them cause those who they cure to be healed. For people and demons there will be no difference. From

this day forward, if there is a Daoist priest who chants this scripture and illness is not cured, officials do not give promotions, and punishments are not undone, then the demon kings and the Great Devil King of Azure Perfection will have their heads broken into twelve pieces.

The Dao said to the various demons, all of the true and false gods, 18,000 pneumas of the Dao, and 36 million red demons of the ten directions: From this day forward, each of you will control the soldiers under your command and stab all of them and command them to go 10,000 miles away and never permit them to cause the myriad people to be sick or wasting. As for the spirits of the land, if this is a place where a priest is using this scripture, diseases will cure themselves, and all of his desires will be fulfilled. If one day you do not [act] in accordance with this law then the great demon kings will have their heads broken into 30 pieces.

The Dao said: Today people are ill and it is because of the *lianzi*.¹²⁴ Heaven will dispatch twelve kinds of stalwarts to seize them. From now on, the Ritual Masters of the Three Caverns and priests who hear the Most High will aid sick people by chanting this scripture. As for men and women from families who have performed a *Zhai* ceremony, [the *lianzi*] who do not aid the priests and cause these living people to fall ill and do not in turn cure them will be beheaded and killed without mercy.

The Dao said: The *lianzi* number 80,000,000 people. They spread poisonous pneumas and cause people to be seriously ill with their infectious pneumas. Now 360,000 *lianzi* have descended to spread eye pain. From this day forward, you must

¹²⁴ 連子 *lianzi* literally means “spreaders.”

control your lesser demons and if they do not depart then the demon kings will have their heads broken into sixty pieces.

The Dao said: In the world there are no good people. The only good people come from Heaven. When the ruler has great faith in the Dao this is also sent from Heaven. As for those who now worship the Three Caverns, it is because they had a strong karmic affinity in previous lives that they will hear or see them. From this day forward, if there is a place where priests are evangelizing, demon kings will seek them out and aid them. If there is illness, they will cure it so that they will not allow any death. If, one day, one does not [act] in accordance with this law, he will be beheaded without mercy.

The Dao said: The people of the world do not have faith in the great religion, so that there are many sinners. Sinners enter into the hells¹²⁵ where demon soldiers act indiscriminately and do not differentiate between good and evil. Now, if there is one who has received the Dao the Great Devil King Purple Perfection, Kong Lun 孔倫, Ma Yanshuai 馬廷帥, Chong Chouyuan 崇仇淵, and others will each aid him and use their strength for his benefit. They will bolster his Daoist heart, causing rulers to exalt him and enlighten the foolish people. If a priest is controlling disease in a place, the demonic pneumas will get control of themselves and go one thousand miles away. As for those who are not subdued, the devil kings will behead them without mercy. The Dao said: Now, as for the demons of the ten directions, it was the devil kings who assembled them. From this day forward, they will not unjustly kill the virtuous.

¹²⁵ 地獄 *diyu*: "earth prisons."

At dawn they will gather and in the evening they will go out to aid men and women.

In a place where a priest is traveling, demon kings will aid him and will not allow evil people or deviant demons to distract or hinder him. If there are people or demons that have plans to impose their evil designs on a priest, they will be arrested one by one and all of the people and demons will be killed in order to brighten the heart of the Dao. These are the Most High's highest words. You should heed them. If one day you do not follow them, you will be beheaded without mercy.

The Dao said: Among the world's sinners, there are eighty-nine types of killer demons. The great demons of mountains, forests, water, fire, wind, and earth form 3,900 swarms, are commanded by the Demon King of Great Harmony and they spread ten thousand types of illness. The thirty-six types of demons of the six domestic animals [are lead by] the Demon King Du Nu 都奴, who commands eight hundred-thousand lesser demons. They descend to spread diseases of evil boils that drip blood. There are also three thousand crow demons. [Their] demon king is named Wen Qingzi 文慶子. They spread the red disease and white lesion disease.

These cannot be cured. If there are those who evilly rebel and do not have faith in the essentials of the Three Caverns, they will all encounter these evil birds, who fly towards them, bringing down these diseases. For those who are infected, out of ten thousand, [even one] cannot be cured. From this day forward, in a place where a priest is saving people, then they will command plagues and illnesses to leave and be cured, their myriad desires will be fulfilled, and the demon kings will transfer merit to the ten thousand [sick people].

The Dao said: In the Middle Kingdoms there are 390 million people who deserve to be transcendents. In Qinchuan 秦川, Hanshu 漢蜀, and Sanwu 三吳, Sun Daoliu 孫道留, Wang Zining 王子寧, Tang Wansheng 唐萬生, Jiao Shizi 焦石子, Liu Guangzhi 劉光之, Ma Chengqing 馬承慶, Xun Taichu 荀太初, Sima Ping 司馬平, Guo Xiuzhi 郭秀之, Ding Tailun 丁太倫, Le Fahu 樂法護, Xie Ying 謝英, An Feihou 安費侯, Wang Zilin 王子林, Yuan Boren 元伯任, Yuan Sun 元孫, Zhi DaoLin 支道林, and others numbering three thousand will gather medicines for Du Lanxiang 杜蘭香 and come to Wudang 武當 Palace. Now, only the priests, who with all their hearts receive the teachings of the Three Caverns, will also meet face-to-face with these transcendents. As for the priests who exert their strength to save the myriad people who are facing inauspicious times, they will make sure nothing happens to them. In the place where they perform rituals and chant this scripture, the devil kings will subjugate themselves. Those who are not subdued will be repeatedly beheaded without mercy.

The Dao said: Of the teachings of the Three Caverns, the [Scripture of] Divine Spells is the most essential. Why is this? [This is because] this scripture subdues all of the great devil kings so that they would not dare to disturb you. From this day forward, in a place where a priest is passing by, forty-nine devil kings, including the *lianzi* from Crow river, Wen Jixiu 文吉休, and Feng Linzi 馮鄰子, with 3,600 lesser kings,

will each aid and protect this priest, and will not allow [others] to distract and obstruct this priest. If you act in this way, you will be promoted, and rise into non-action as a transcendent. If they do not assist priests, aid evil with their power, ruin or cause chaos in the orthodox law, and cause priests cures to not heal, cause priests to not be approved, or are evil just one day, the devil kings who previously indicted them will behead them without mercy. One by one, as the mouth of the Most High orders. Swiftly, swiftly as the ordinances command.

The Dao said: There are 490 million evil demons in the world. These demons come and cause people to die. They spread ten thousand types of evil pneumas. These pneumas come and kill people. When an accomplished priest chants this scripture, these diseases are stopped. As for kings who generate faith in the Dao and exalt the Three Caverns, their sons and grandsons will achieve high status. The great devil kings Wang Ziniao 王子鳥, Chun Linqi 純林期, [and others] numbering 80,000,000, in the *renwu* and *guigai* years, will lead ten thousand demons to kill people. [Because I] already know your names, from this day forward, you will not recklessly kill worthy people. As for these, the great devil kings and lesser demons are compassionately faithful. The followers who hate the Yang will each be beheaded without mercy.

The Dao said: In the Middle Kingdoms in the *renchen* year, the Perfect Lord will come into the world. For the 30,000,000 people, there will be just one ruler. At this time many men and women will be ill. In the *renwu* year followers will proselytize to ignorant people. Ignorant people do not have faith in the Daoist religion. They have not received the Three Caverns. When water comes, they will be killed, and armies

will mutually arise. What shall we do? What shall we do? As for those Daoist priests who have received this scripture, the devil kings will aid them and they will not be cut down in their prime. They will take charge when Daoist priests are controlling disease and all diseases will be cured. If, one day, [they] violate this law, then the devil kings will have their heads smashed into eighteen pieces.

The Dao said: There are many evil people in the world. They do not understand the Dao; even when they see it they do not follow it. This is why many will die. Now there are the Ritual Masters of the Three Caverns who are exalted by people and demons. From this day forward, the places where Daoist priests chant this scripture and perform a ritual, the devil kings must not hinder them. If one day [someone] violates this order, demon kings will use a Celestial Axe to behead them without mercy. Swiftly, swiftly, as the regulations of the mouth of the Most High command.

The Dao said: One by one I have announced these things. The devil kings of the Thirty-Six Heavens and the sons of devil kings will all reverentially receive, exalt, and circulate [this scripture].

Bibliography

Primary Texts

Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi 洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科戒營始 CT 1125

Dongxuan lingbao benxiang yundu jieqi jing 洞玄靈寶本相運度劫期經 CT 319

Nüqing guilü 女青鬼律 CT 790

Taishang dongyuan sanmei shenzhou zhai chanxie yi 太上洞淵三昧神咒齋懺謝儀 CT 525

Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing 太上洞淵神呪經 CT 335

Secondary Resources

Benn, Charles D. “Daoist Ordination and *Zhai* Rituals in Medieval China.” *Daoism Handbook*, Livia Kohn, ed. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

Bokenkamp, Stephen R. *Early Daoist Scriptures*. University of California Press, 1997.

Cohn, Norman. “The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages, Revised and Expanded Edition.” New York: Oxford University Press, 1961.

Bunker, Emma. “The Spirit Kings in Sixth-Century Chinese Buddhist Sculpture.” *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America* 18 (1964): 26-37.

- Dubs, Homer H. "An Ancient Chinese Mystery Cult." *Harvard Theological Review* 35 (1942): 222-40.
- Hucker, Charles O. *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1985.
- Kohn, Livia. "The Beginnings and Cultural Characteristics of East Asian Millenarianism." *Japanese Religions* 23 (1998): 29-53.
- Li, Shuhuan 李叔還. *Daojiao da cidian 道教大辭典*. Taipei: Juliu tushu gongsi 巨流圖書公司, 1979.
- Mollier, Christine. *Une Apocalypse Taoïste du Ve Siècle. Le Livre des Incantations des Grottes Abyssales*. Paris: Collège de France, 1990.
- Ōfuchi, Ninji 大淵忍爾. *Tonkō Dōkyō 敦煌道經*. Tōkyō 東京: Fukutake Shoten 福武書店, 1978-1979.
- Seidel, Anna. "The Image of the Perfect Ruler in Early Taoist Messianism." *History of Religions* 9 (1969): 216-47.
- . "Taoist Messianism." *Numen* 31.2 (1984): 161-174.
- Schipper, Kristofer. "A Study of *Buxu*: Taoist Liturgical Hymn and Dance." Tsao, Pen-yeh; Law, Daniel P.L., eds. *Studies of Taoist rituals and music of today*. Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1989. 110-120.
- Schipper, Kristofer and Verellen, Franciscus eds. *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*. 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Seiwert, Hubert. *Popular Religious Movements and Heterodox Sects in Chinese History*. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- Stein, Rolf. "Religious Taoism and Popular Religion from the Second to Seventh Centuries." *Facets of Taoism*. Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel, eds. New Haven: Yale, 1979. 53-81.
- Strickmann, Michel. *Chinese Magical Medicine*. Bernard Faure, ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.
- . *Poetry and Prophecy*. Bernard Faure, ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

Schwartz, Hillel. "Millenariansim." *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Mircea Eliade, ed. New York: Macmillan. (1987) 9:521-32.

ter Haar, Barend J. "Messianism and the Heaven and Earth Society: Approaches to Heaven and Earth Society Texts." *"Secret Societies" Reconsidered: Perspectives on the Social History of Modern South China and Southeast Asia*. David Ownby and Mary Somers Heidhues eds. Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1993. 153-176.

Zürcher, Erik. *Buddhist Conquest of China*. Leiden: Brill, 1959.

---. "Buddhist Influence on Early Taoism." *T'oung-pao* 66 (1980): 84-147.

---. "Prince Moonlight: Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism." *T'oung Pao* 68 (1982): 1-75.